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MY SCHOOL
AND
MY GOSPEL

OUR VILLAGE

By kind permission of the Rt. Hon. Lord Pirrie.

From the oil painting by the author.

MY SCHOOL AND MY GOSPEL

BY PROFESSOR SIR HUBERT VON HERKOMER C.V.O. R.A. D.C.L. ETC.

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PREFACE

This is but a plain story, told as best I could, of my school and theories of teaching. I offer it to the public with some feelings of trepidation, as it is my first attempt to write a book for publication.

Much of my subject demanded psychological analysis. I have, however, drifted into polemics that may, I fear, be considered alien to My School and My Gospel. But that was inevitable; and I take comfort in the thought that my arguments may, after all, be found to fulfil a purpose in a book that I ask may be judged as a human document.

Hubert von Herkomer.

Lululaund, Bushey, Herts.,
September 1907.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Title.	Artist.	By Kind Permission of	Facing Page
'Our Village' (Coloured plate) .	The Author . .	Rt. Hon. Lord Pirrie	*Frontis-piece*
A Drawing from *The Palette*, .	Do. . .	.....	*Title-page*
A Photo-group of the Students in front of the Author's house (June 1894) . . .	...	. ...	2
'The Painter's Family'. . .	G. Harcourt . .	.....	6
A Drawing from *Punch*. . .	Linley Sambourne .	Bradbury, Agnew & Co.	10
'Joan of Arc'	R. Wheelwright, R.B.A.	The Autotype Co. .	16
A Drawing from *The Palette*. .	The Author . .	.....	22
'The Swineherd' (A Screen) .	Amy Sawyer . .	.....	26
'Hard Times' (Photogravure plate)	The Author . .	Manchester City Art Gallery . .	30
A Drawing from *The Palette*. .	Annie Knight . .	.....	34
'The Lost Sheep'	A. U. Soord . .	The Autotype Co. .	38
A Drawing from *The Palette*. .	J. Syddall . . .	.....	42
Do. do.	Do. . . .	.....	46
Monthly Title-page to *The Palette*	The Author . .	.....	50
Drawing of an Old Man from *The Palette*	.....	.....	54
Monthly Title-page to *The Palette*	The Author . .	...	58
'Horses Bathing in the Sea' .	Lucy E. Kemp-Welch, R.B.A. . . .	R. Wyman . .	62
A Drawing from *The Palette* .	J. Syddall . . .	... ..	68
Monthly Title-page to *The Palette*	The Author . .	... ..	72
A Drawing from *The Palette* .	.... .	. . .	76
Do. do.	D. A. Wehrschmidt, .	. ...	80
'The Leper's Wife' . . .	G. Harcourt . .		84
A Pencil Drawing	A. U. Soord . .	.....	88

MY SCHOOL AND MY GOSPEL

Title.	Artist.	By Kind Permission of	Facing Page
Monthly Title-page to *The Palette*	The Author . .	.....	92
'The late T. H. Worrall' . .	D. A. Wehrschmidt .	.....	96
Monthly Title-page to *The Palette*	The Author . .	.....	100
A Drawing from *The Palette* .	J. Syddall . . .	.....	104
'The Hon. Charlotte Clive' . .	D. A. Wehrschmidt .	P. & D. Colnaghi & Co.	108
A Pencil Drawing	A. U. Soord . .	.....	112
'Morning'	Arneshy Brown, A.R.A.	.....	116
'In the Convent Church, Landsberg-am-Lech, Bavaria' . .	W. B. Bennett . .	Rt. Hon. Lord Burton .	120
A Drawing from *The Palette* .	.....	.....	126
'Miss Coussmaker,' after Hoppner (Photogravure plate) . . .	Norman Hirst . .	T. Agnew & Sons .	132
Title-page to *An Idyl* . . .	The Author . .	.....	136
Miss Griffiths as 'The Sorceress' (Photo from life) . . .	.....	.....	140
The Two Shepherds in *The Sorceress*	Lockhart Bogle (deceased) . . .	.....	144
Illustration to *The Sorceress* (Coloured plate)	The Author . .	.....	148
Do. do. . . .	Lockhart Bogle (deceased) . .	.....	152
Illustration to *An Idyl*—Opening Scene in First Act . . .	The Author . .	.....	156
Illustration to *An Idyl* . . .	Do . . .	.....	160
Do. do. . . .	Do. . . .	.....	168
Dramatis Personæ of *An Idyl* .	.....	.....	174
Illustration to *An Idyl* (Closing scene)	The Author . .	.....	192
A Drawing from *Punch* . .	Linley Sambourne .	Bradbury, Agnew & Co.	200
'A Zither Evening with my Students in my Studio' (Photogravure plate)	The Author . .	The Berlin Photographic Co. . .	216
Sir Hubert von Herkomer . .	J. Seymour Lucas, R.A.	.....	220

Note.—The illustrations of the monthly title-pages of the School Magazine, *The Palette*, are reproduced from the author's original monotypes.

CHAPTER I

When I first settled in Bushey, some thirty-four years ago, it was a sleepy, picturesque village. It had no water laid on, and there was no sanitation, except of the most primitive kind. The drinking-water was brought to the houses in buckets, for which the old people, who carried it round, charged a halfpenny a bucket. The one and only well from which they could obtain this drinking-water was situated quite near the churchyard: a rather doubtful proximity, according to our modern ideas. There was, of course, the usual well attached to each house for collecting surface water, which, I remember, was always well stocked with live matter. A few years later, however, a deep well was sunk near Watford (the adjoining town), from which an inexhaustible supply of the very best water was brought to the village.

In my picture, 'Our Village,' reproduced in this book, I have given the aspect of the village, although the picture was painted some years after the period I mention. The village church still had its perfect elm-tree. The old church, that edifice of flint and stone, was of the truly English type—a type immortalised by many an English poet and painter. The high street of the village still retained its quaint old houses. At eventide, in the sleepy summer days, every cottage had its front door open; the

women and children were standing about in picturesque groups awaiting the husbands and fathers coming from their daily labours. There was a somnolence and there was a peace unattainable in our day. There were no motor-cars; there were no motor-buses. But few trains ran to London, and in the early days I speak of no City men crowded the platforms of Bushey station in the mornings and evenings. Indeed, when I first came to Bushey there was not even a station; nothing but a little shanty and a porter. But it was enough for the requirements of the inhabitants. There was, however, one inhabitant who daily went to town. He was the model I introduced in after years as the principal figure in my picture of the Charterhouse chapel—a splendid-looking Englishman, a cultivated John Bull in physical type and mind. In some way or other he was connected with, or known to, the staff of *Punch*, and was, I know for a fact, the prototype of the John Bull so often drawn by Sir John Tenniel in his cartoons. He was represented considerably stouter. There were also some minor changes made; and I remember a great draughtsman upon the staff of *Punch* giving it as his opinion that a man with that figure, as drawn, would have been unable to stand upright, and would have toppled forward.

In those days we never heard of the unemployed in Bushey, nor of the new type, 'the unemployable.' During the hardest frosts there were some labourers out of work, but that time seemed to be bridged over by them, without much appeal to charity. I constantly had models from the

village, yet I do not remember that they complained of hardships.

It was a typical English village. Who does not know the English cottage (the street-door opening straight into the front room) with its odds and ends of furniture, picked up goodness knows where, and the gimcrack ornaments crowding the mantelpiece? Who does not know the Robin Hood in china striking an attitude; the barely recognisable cats of the same material; glittering vases with the glass drops hanging from the sides—all the result of an exchange of rabbit-skins and old bottles, collected by the man who goes round from cottage to cottage, corrupting taste? How different to the homes of the Bavarian peasants, with their large rooms, all of wood, with space and opportunity for perfect cleanliness!

Naturally, an English village so near London could not escape from the advancing influences of the times, which meant change, if not progress; and it was the formation of my school that perhaps hastened the change. I think the progressive stages towards luxurious modernity were well illustrated in the animals I had at different times. First, I started with a donkey—an obstinate creature, who would insist on lying down in the middle of the road; then I advanced to a pony (a wonderfully good goer); then to horses. The final step was away from animals to motor-cars.

The village started with one well for drinking-water; advanced to an abundant supply, laid on; from that to a scheme for sanitation; and now the old houses are being

pulled down for the erection of modern shops. Motor-buses ply from Watford to Harrow Station; various light-railway schemes are projected for the main road; and a railway is in contemplation from Edgware to Watford. The promoters of the last-named scheme had made their plans in the first instance to bring the line almost under the studio-window of my present house. I was not approached in the matter, so I determined to fight the scheme. To do so I of course employed legal assistance, but the first help was given me by my students. The promoters, being afraid of opposition, convened the first public meeting in a rather small room in the village, to which admission was only *by card*. Hearing of this I gathered my little army of male students, and said to them: 'Now, boys, you must "swamp" that meeting. Go a good while before the doors are open, and then fill the room. Mind, there must be no riot, but you can make all the noise you like. Make as many rude remarks as may be suggested to you in the course of the proceedings.' It may be imagined with what wild enthusiasm this was taken up. The three promoters were terribly frightened, and a student was actually put in the chair. The failure of that meeting, from the promoters' point of view, was the initial cause of their being unable to get their first scheme through. They did, however, get a second bill passed, which was quite harmless to Bushey proper.

So little had the village altered when I started the school, that such a thing as lodgings was unheard of; and great was the astonishment of the villagers when they were

THE PAINTER'S FAMILY

From the oil painting by George Harcourt.

asked if they could put up a student of the art school that was being inaugurated. The more energetic and speculative at once arranged their best furniture for the sitting-room, and their best beds for the sleeping apartment. To others, I gave some little pecuniary assistance with which to establish themselves, and so, with the superintendence of a lady of my family, who also fixed the charges to be made, the lodging question was solved. It was not a little amusing to note how proud the villagers were of the ornaments on their mantelpieces; and they even thought the students would be pleased not only with these, 'as they made the room look nice,' but with the awful pictures and prints they had on the walls. Needless to say, the latter were soon removed by the students to make room for their nude life-studies, much to the chagrin of the landladies.

Before the school was ready to receive students, I brought the scheme to the notice of the public at a lecture I gave in a large provincial town. I broadly outlined the methods of teaching I intended to carry out, and dwelt rather romantically on the idyllic life the students were going to lead in this village. My enthusiasm was received with sympathetic incredulity. 'All very delightful,' they seemed to say, 'but Utopian.' Yet an unquestionable interest was aroused throughout the country; and when the day arrived for the opening, there were some twenty-five students of both sexes who had answered to the necessary qualifications, and were ready to follow my dictates without a murmur.

The qualification was: *a head from life, drawn in*

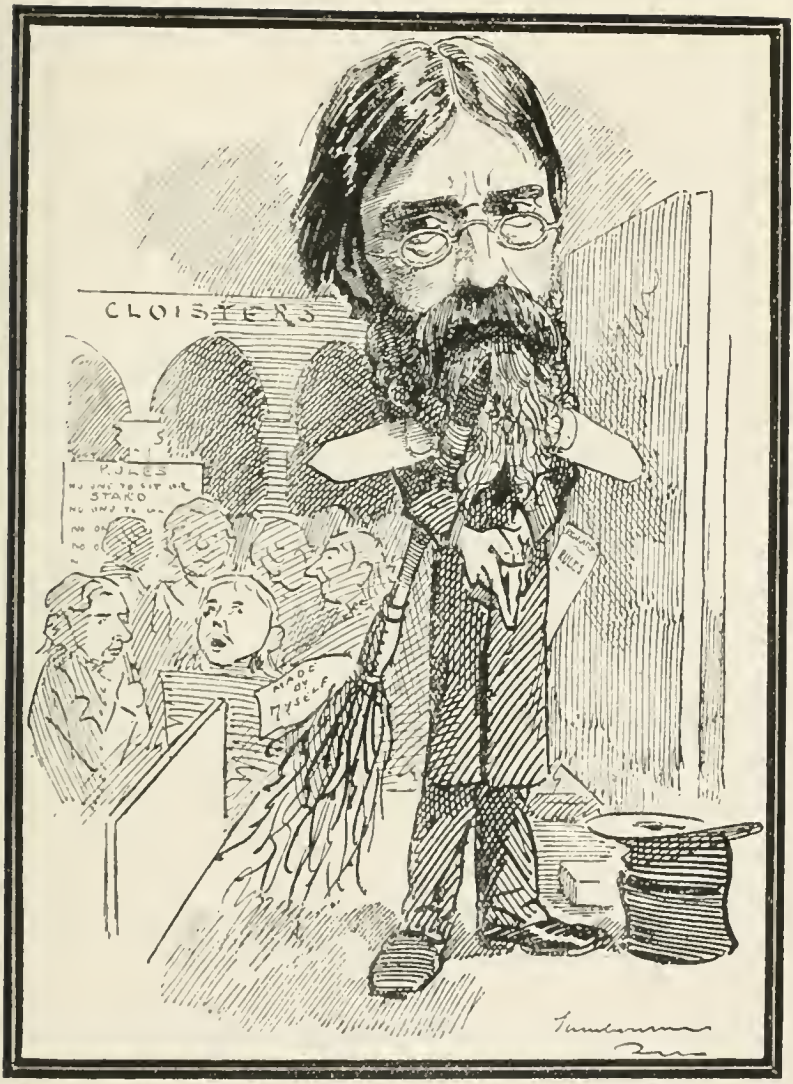
charcoal; and there was a condition that the student must stay, when once accepted, for three terms (nine months), and live in Bushey.

But before the work could commence, some inaugural ceremony was necessary, and I gave them a dinner in the large wooden studio I had built in my garden, for I was then living in a couple of working-men's cottages, only slightly altered for greater convenience.

My friend Mr. (now Sir) Joseph Swan lighted the whole studio with little electric lamps, looking and blinking like a constellation of stars, trying to the eyes, and extremely unsteady, as the current had to be produced from primary cells. That was before electric lighting was made practicable,—indeed, before the advent of the dynamo.

It was no small matter, as we were situated, to prepare a dinner for some forty people. But I put the arrangements into the hands of a German chef, who, with his German waiters, did wonders under the circumstances. As I was then a strict teetotaler, the drink was water. But so great was the excitement and such were the high spirits amongst those students that none of them felt the want of any more potent drink. The band of the Grenadier Guards, that I had engaged to play after dinner, was almost overpowering in that studio, and it made some of the female students *jump* when the first chord of the National Anthem was sounded. But the brass instruments gave a vigorous touch to the occasion.

Then came the fateful moment when the students were to see the school and commence work. The curiosity and



Reproduced by the special permission of the Proprietors of 'Punch.'

expectation was heightened by the day of enforced idleness (a Sunday), which came between the dinner and the opening day. At nine o'clock on that Monday morning I received each student at the door of the school, which had been kept strictly closed until that moment.

The school had not been open long before exaggerated and twisted accounts got about, relating to some of my laws. Indignant letters were sent me by ladies unconnected with the school, who had gathered from garbled accounts that I insisted on the women standing at the easel, without the chance of sitting down to work. As a matter of fact, I merely said to them on that point: 'Stand to your work if you possibly can.' But those who were obliged to sit felt how it handicapped them in freedom. *Punch* reflected these rumours very good-naturedly in an amusing drawing representing me standing in a sanctimonious attitude, with a birch under my arm (marked, 'made by myself') and with papers of rules sticking out of my ample coat-pocket; beyond, the students, with woe-begone faces, and a board of rules upon the wall,—one rule running: 'No student allowed to sit or *stand*.'

Well, strict the rules certainly were at the beginning, but I soon relaxed them as occasion suggested necessary changes to me. That is the benefit of being absolute in power: there was nobody to question my word. I could alter the rules every twenty-four hours if I thought fit, or considered it to the benefit of the working of the school, and I expected them to be obeyed. And obeyed they were. There never came together a more enthusiastic,

loyal, and earnest set of students than those I had around me. Even if some of the rules or directions went against the grain, the students courageously struggled to carry out the wishes of their master. The devotion of these men and women belongs to the happiest memories of my life. We were making a school under conditions never perhaps before attempted—a school of art in a village. It was all an experiment, and no master in the world could have made it a success without the full-hearted and enthusiastic co-operation of the students. It was my good fortune to have the right material at the beginning, which was all-important for such a novel undertaking. An art atmosphere had to be created, and nobody, who has not tried to make a special atmosphere of this kind, can know what the task entails. It cost me many a sleepless night; it taxed my resources to the utmost; it took the very vitality out of me. But it was worth all it cost me, and I would willingly do it all again,—given youth and strength.

The curriculum was simple: painting from the nude living model from nine until three, five days in the week; drawing in charcoal or pencil from the nude model at night from seven till nine; on the Saturday morning, a village model was requisitioned for head painting only.

There were no prizes to be given, therefore competition —that most uncertain and unfair of methods for gauging talent—was eliminated. The students were taught neither tricks nor hard-and-fast methods of work. I did not intend to give them 'crutches' with which to hobble about as *lame Herkomers* when they left the school.

Put briefly, the system was principally 'a search for the personality of each student.' The result of this method of teaching has been that the world cannot recognise my pupils in their works, and it will probably be said that I have left no 'school' behind me. But I never could understand the advantage of squeezing the supple mind of a young painter into a master's manner, from which he may never wholly extricate himself. It was the word 'quality' that most puzzled and baffled the students; the weaker thought it was something *I* wanted, and did not realise that it was an essential part of good art. The word was on every lip; it was heard in the street of sleepy Bushey; it was heard in the social gatherings of the students; it was the last thought of the student when he went to bed, and the first when he got up. This question of quality certainly was the most difficult thing to get them to understand. How thankful I was when at last I could point to a particular part in a study that *had* attained the desired quality; and how bitterly disappointed I felt when I saw it slip away again, sometimes to return no more. Often, however, if it came by an unconscious effort, or by accident, and was not recognised by the student, it returned where there was true talent. To obtain a sense of 'quality' I directed the students to paint each part of the figure, that is, as much as they could finish in a day, '*alla prima*,' with all attention to brushwork, colour, and tonality. It mattered not whether one part fitted into the other, painted as they were under different aspects of light, etc. But this method constituted a most direct exercise

for 'seeing.' It also showed them clearly that no second touch in oil colour ever equals the first on the white canvas for purity. The mass of white canvas that surrounded the part they were painting somewhat disconcerted them at first. But they soon learned to ignore it.

I must mention that the two life-rooms in the school were differently lighted. The larger one had a high dado of dark oak, and a high northern side-light, and the other room had plain walls distempered with a purplish colour, and a low dado: it had a top-light also, in addition to the high northern side-light. At half-term the students changed rooms. My purpose in that arrangement was to prevent the eye from getting accustomed to the one light. It was much easier to paint a nude figure with the dark background of that oak room than in the other, with its baffling subtlety of colour as a background. In the latter room the figure looked practically as if it were in the open air. This produced difficulties that caused the students much trouble, but it was a most wholesome and necessary exercise. We have known some distinguished artists whose works showed unmistakable signs of all the sitters having been placed in the same position towards the window. Shadows came alike, and high lights appeared in the same place. It certainly made it easier for the painter, but it produced a fatal similarity of light and shade. To give an example, I would quote that strong and distinguished painter, Frank Holl, who placed his sitters on a platform that was invariably fixed on one spot in the studio, so that the light fell in the same way on all

JOAN OF ARC

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From the oil painting by R. Wheelwright, R.B.A.

faces. This produced a certain sameness in every subject: I mean, it had a levelling effect, the very last thing one would desire in portraiture. Then his background was so arranged as to form a deep, indefinite gloom,—very fine for some portrait subjects, but fatal to others. For mere painting purposes it was very fascinating, as a head in such light, and with such a background, stands out, so to speak, in great relief, and is a great deal easier to paint than a head in a subtle, diffused light.

Owing to this arrangement of light, Frank Holl never painted an eye in his sitter: it was always in shadow. It is impossible to render an expression of face without the eye: it is the very keynote to the character.

Now it happened that there were students, especially amongst the women, who thought they knew better than I did as to proper methods of painting, and aired their views freely to the class in my absence. An extract from the diary of a female student bearing on this point may here be inserted:—

'There was a new girl in the life-room who gave us her views about painting the flesh. She declared, very authoritatively, that it could never be done satisfactorily without *under-painting* in some complementary colour, and added that all this painting "alla prima" was nonsense. Such impudence put us all on the *qui vive* to see what would happen when the Professor came. Well, she proceeded to paint the whole torso with *Indian red* and white. She evidently did not know that the Professor's visits were always unexpected. Therefore, instead of transforming the torso into flesh colour in all haste, she continued to lay in the legs,—not with Indian red this time, but with bright *Prussian blue*. We were all aghast!

'Suddenly, on the Friday morning, the Professor appeared. The

girl happened to be the first he went to. All eyes were fixed on his face; to our surprise he never moved a muscle; he looked long at the study, then turned to *look at her*, then back to the study, then without uttering a word, or showing a sign of what he thought, he turned away to examine another student's work. That girl never tried the same trick again.'

I remember that study, and also remember that I reflected on what to say. My decision was to say *nothing*, as the study was only a harmless exhibition of conceit, not likely to recur.

I was sometimes baffled in finding the cause for the entire work of a room going wrong; but the cause always *had to be found*, and I was obliged to resort to some rather queer ways in order to get at the solution of the difficulty. An extract from another female student's diary may be instructive here:—

'It was ever the Professor's custom to devise new methods of stirring up our flagging energies. I well remember his coming in one morning, at the commencement of the week's work. We were hardly settled at our easels before the studio-door burst open with the "Boss's" unmistakeable snap; he greeted us with these words: 'I am going to stay in this studio all the blessed day, and watch every stroke you do; and then I shall find out what 's wrong with you all." He was as good as his word, and as he walked leisurely around, looking at all we did, and rarely, if ever, making a remark, our feelings can be better imagined than described. It was a much more trying ordeal than the most severe criticism he could have given us. It was a good test of character, too, and it was by means of this kind that he managed to find out what we really had in us.'

Coming back to the question of 'quality in painting,' it may be asked why I made so much of that, and neglected the more general education of the student's mind?

To answer that, I must go back to the years when I began to study art. When, after some years of floundering (so to speak), and experimenting, I was able to produce some successful work, I saw plainly the difficulties which had continually balked me, and no doubt belonged especially to my idiosyncrasy. I also saw clearly how a word in the right direction, at the right time, would have enabled me to reach my successful period in half the time. But the word in the right direction would have meant a thorough understanding of my temperament, and this was not vouchsafed me. The studies that I made from the nude model at the South Kensington Schools were purposeless and aimless; and the teaching (in the true sense) was worthless to me.

Of quality, as I understood it later on, there was none in my studies; they were superficial, and artistically uninteresting; they were always easily and quickly done; they led nowhere. The criticisms of the two masters were useless. The head-master, although a worthy man, was an indifferent historical painter, and the other was an equally indifferent landscape painter. The models (only male) were posed by the latter, and the poses were invariably uninspiring and monotonous. Let me here say that I always felt it a mistake for the master to pose the model. This is an exercise most beneficial to the student, and I made it a rule from the beginning that every student in my school should, in turn, pose the model for the week, and that the pose should be accepted by the whole class.

CHAPTER II

It happened that before I left the South Kensington Schools, I came under the spell of Frederick Walker's work. There was much discussion in the class-room over Walker's first essay in oils, his picture of 'The Bathers.' I was at once bitten by the newness of his methods of painting, and of his view of nature. But that particular newness in his painting was the result of his training as a wood-draughtsman, which to the end of his days showed in both his water-colour work and his oils. With all his exquisite refinement, he never was a painter *per se*, such as Velasquez and Millais. One could recognise in his oil-colour work a perpetual struggle with the medium, and oddly enough, it was the evident signs of imperfect manipulation, arising from this struggle, that so fascinated me. Here was the first moment when I needed a master to guide me, as a fascination for a technical imperfection in another painter's work (which arises from inexperience and ignorance in the student's mind) works for mischief. It did so in my case. Instinctively, no doubt, Walker's feeling for nature was eminently sympathetic to me, but I was unable to separate that feeling from the expression. An understanding master would have made that clear to me.

I went through the same stages as Walker, who worked some time as a wood-draughtsman before he painted in

water-colours, and then, much later, took up the stronger medium, oil. Walker would have saved himself much technical worry in oils, if he had worked in that medium when he was drawing on wood, and the character of the wood-draughtsman would not have so completely permeated his life's work. It is, therefore, essential for a student to grasp the oil-colour medium in the early stages of his career. It is curious that the German, Adolf Menzel, showed signs in all his work which were the distinct outcome of his wood-drawing period. He was first of all a lithographer, then a wood-draughtsman, then a water-colourist, and finally an oil-colour painter; but he remained, by preference, a draughtsman.

Although the wood-draughtsman's work is an excellent training for recognising subjects that are pictorially interesting, there is one important element in the treating of them in that medium, which is not much called into requisition; and that is, the 'picture-making element.' A drawing is often the more piquant by being a little odd in its design,—perhaps even fragmentary; whereas a pictorial composition, in the truer sense of the word, must have its balance and proportion in the design. It will easily be understood, therefore, that the early habitual work in wood-drawing fixes a habit of 'seeing' that is not conducive to the requirements of true picture-making; and it has been proved in many cases that the effects of that early habit have never been wholly shaken off.

Now George Mason painted the same subjects as Walker, and with much the same feeling for nature; but

he was trained at the beginning as a painter, and not as a wood-draughtsman; consequently his work had a homogeneity in its manipulation, which has often been found absent in the paintings of a wood-draughtsman.

The 'Walker period,' although it deeply affected some of his contemporaries, was short-lived, not owing to his early death, but to the character of his painting and composition, which was not strong enough to resist the changes in taste.

I have lavished much praise on Walker in one of my lectures, and I am now criticising him to illustrate the influence certain of his characteristics had on me when I was in the tenderest years of my career—an influence that kept back the development of my natural bent. Of course, I was guilty of the faults of all imitators, who invariably exaggerate the peculiarities of the master they are trying to follow. A master who understood my temperament would have left me my love for Walker's work, and yet shown me how I could have developed my own individuality, which I had so much trouble in establishing.

I certainly did free myself, although unconsciously, from Walker's methods, when I painted my oil-picture of the Chelsea Pensioners in church, 'The Last Muster.' The subject of this picture was first drawn for *The Graphic*. Then I painted it in water-colours—a commission from the manager of *The Graphic*; and this was an improvement on the first work, although I adhered to the general design. Finally I painted it in oil-colour. For reasons I need not enlarge on here, this picture had to be painted quickly; it was a *tour de force* done at the early

THE SWINEHERD

From the oil painting (on a screen) by Amy Sawyer.

age of twenty-five, as an outcome of my ambition to make my mark as a painter without more delay. It was the work of three and a half months. Speaking from memory, I think Ruskin's criticism of it was, that it had little more value than an ordinary wood-cut illustration. Perhaps there was some truth in the comparison, as I had retained the general scheme of composition introduced in my first wood-drawing of the subject. It represented a 'section' of the chapel, with all the figures, sitting on their benches, that that section contained. It had no beginning and no end in the grouping of the figures; and it only suggested by the attitude and demeanour of the pensioners, that a service was going on in the building, which was unmistakably a chapel. But I could not see my way to any other treatment for a satisfactory characterisation of those old veterans. It might have been called a study of character rather than a picture. But Ruskin's stricture was not endorsed, as was shown by the fact that the picture had an extraordinary, and, to me, unexpected success, both with painters and with public, and it gained me first the applause of the Council of the Royal Academy when it came before them, and then the great medal of honour in the Paris Exhibition of 1878. Such was, however, my fanatical adherence to all the peculiarities of Walker's art and method of painting, that, when this picture was finished, I hated the work, because it was so 'unlike Walker.' Indeed, in my next effort, I drifted back to Walker. Here was the second and more crucial moment when I needed the understanding master and friend.

It will now be understood that I learned to know the needs of other students through my own various experiences, and when I had to formulate a system of teaching—if indeed it can be called a system—I went back in my mind to my youth for suggestions, with the result that I made the very foundation of my teaching 'the awakening in the student of the sensitiveness to painter-like qualities,' and the discovery of individual bent.

By this method it was interesting to note how every successful student produced a different kind of quality and brushwork, clearly proving that the insistence on that phase in the technique in no way interfered with the development of his own personal idiosyncrasy.

The recognition of tonality and values seemed to follow as a matter of course. And it is of great importance when those two factors come without apparent effort, or as the result of a search in the direction of quality.

I had many pupils who had at first studied at a certain school where they were taught to ignore both tones and values. The form alone, without any suggestion of colour, was represented; you could not tell whether the model's hair was black or white, as only the shadows were given. Then the only method of shading permitted was of a distinct type, to be carried out by all the students alike. It must have been easily acquired, as the studies sent in to my school by candidates for admission seemed all of one standard of merit.

But the enforcement of this stereotyped manner of

HARD TIMES

This lane on Bushey was named by the students after the picture Hard Times Lane

From the oil painting by the author

work had the effect of crippling free sight, which made it almost impossible for me—at least in most cases—to get the students to feel, and understand, what was meant by 'quality.' Their painted studies were almost uniformly brown and 'leathery.'

CHAPTER III

For black-and-white work I only permitted the use of charcoal and pencil. The former lends itself to sensitive touches (almost resembling brush-work), the latter to incisive drawing. Charcoal work, if done with the direct intention of realising all tones and values, becomes a valuable exercise for painting; and that was its purpose in my school.

I introduced the pencil not only for the attainment of high finish, but for rapid memoranda—for it must be remembered that when I started my school, the fatal kodak had not yet made its appearance. All the students, however, did not master the pencil; but to many facility in its use came naturally, and they succeeded in doing remarkable work.

In most schools, life-drawings are done without a background, that is to say, the white paper behind the figure is left untouched. Now, it would be a physical impossibility to arrange any figure with a background such as is represented by the white paper. Even a white sheet could not answer to it, as that would be in tone. This universal practice of leaving out the background in life-drawings deadens the faculty for seeing tone, or the relation of one thing to another. It forces the student to work from an artificial basis, and that is injurious to his progress.

Of course, these studies with white paper backgrounds look clean and tidy, and no doubt for competition it is necessary that uniformity should be insisted upon. Such competing students must all be shackled with the same chain. Individuality of treatment of studies would be very inconvenient for the judges, and the medal, or prize, is not infrequently given to a student who is destined never to be heard of again. Committees and governors gauge the success of the school by the results of these competitions. The student is therefore led from the beginning to think of the school's reputation before his own. I may differ from most people in my opinion on this matter, but I say without hesitation that a student's ambition should not at the beginning be directed towards the carrying-off of prizes. Success in that direction plays no part in his after life. When successful, for the time being, it puts him into a fool's paradise, dangerous in every way to his judgment of himself. He revels in the possession of his laurels, which may be rudely torn from his brow when he starts to make the real reputation, which is to carry him through a competitive life.

In the art schools, the word 'academic' still holds its sway to a large extent. The academic system deems it essential that the student should learn discipline of mind, and he is in consequence only too often put to work that is unnatural to him. If he almost breaks his heart over it, so much the better! He is given a stated time for his course of studies; the clever student drags out the given time with the one of average talent, for whom the law has been made.

Evidently, from the academic point of view, man's life is infinite; it matters not how much he may be wasting it in his youth by unprofitable studies—all discipline of mind!

Slowly, but surely, I think, the 'academic' nimbus has been darkening, and a rational treatment of the individuality of the student has been in the ascendency. But this change had not yet taken place when I started my school.

While criticising the existing systems of art-tuition, I wish it to be clearly understood that I make no claim to an immaculate system of my own. I established one that appealed to my reason, founded on my own experience, and it has been sufficiently successful to justify its position amongst the others. It could not, however, be followed unless all the conditions were the same,—the most important condition being the establishment of the school in a village, away from the many distracting elements of a big city, and yet within easy reach of the great metropolis. Another condition that I thought necessary, the non-payment of the master, is, however, a matter of opinion.

There has been so much misunderstanding with regard to my not taking a fee for teaching, that perhaps my motive for this ought, once and for all, to be explained. The neighbour who built the school was long suspicious of this decision. But it made the school mine and not his—which, as I found later on, was not what he expected when he undertook to erect the buildings. But that was not the only, nor the principal, reason why I refused to take money for teaching. I could not feel the taking of a fee to be

THE LOST SHEEP

By permission of The Autotype Company. *From the oil painting by A. U. Soord.*

consistent with my love for students, or with my lifelong desire to help them in their career. The public took it for granted that I was paid for my services—in fact that I ran the school for the benefit of my pocket; but that was only natural, and I never troubled to contradict the erroneous impression. Even the villagers had some grotesque ideas on this point. An old village model, whilst sitting to a student, said he thought I must make a good thing out of the school. Asked why, he answered: 'Well, the Professor must get a lot of money when he sells the students' studies.'[1]

If I had taken a fee for teaching in the school, I should have been entitled to payment for continuing it when the students worked outside. For it was an important part of my plan that the students should be encouraged to locate their studios near me, so that I might further assist them at the crucial period when they first attempted to paint pictures or portraits; and but few of the successful students failed to establish themselves at Bushey. I had always looked upon the school as a 'nursery,' where students could learn no more than the rudimentary 'grammar' of painting. But I felt I could save them from many a pitfall if I had the opportunity of continuing my guidance when they started on independent work.

To encourage their settling around me, I built the first

[1] *Note.*—'A painter (in Holland) who was a master, and a member of the Painters' Guild in his locality, might there sell everything that he himself and others had painted. These "others" were mostly the painter's pupils, for in the seventeenth century the opinion of the middle ages still held good—that all pupils' work was the property of the master.'—Dr. W. Martin.

block of studios for the male students, and a lady built a block for the female students. Such 'outside' studios increased rapidly. Landlords began to build them, and the students were helped by their families to do the same. There are at the present moment nearly one hundred of such studios at Bushey. From the condition of things, as established by me, I think it must be plain to all thinking people that I could not take money for the help I gave the students.

MY SCHOOL AND MY GOSPEL

CHAPTER IV

The usual idea of art-training is that the student must first become a good draughtsman in black-and-white, and then learn to paint. That has been proved to be most fallacious. Drawing (that is, with charcoal, chalk and stump, or pencil) is a totally different mental operation from 'drawing with a brush.' It does not therefore follow that a perfect draughtsman must become a perfect painter. We see the truth of this assertion in the works of many a distinguished artist.

After all said and done, a student wants to be a painter, and not merely a draughtsman; and my theory has always been—not to deaden any of the faculties of the student's mind which would lead to that end. Above all things, save the youthful years of the student's life from being wasted, because the painter's 'type of work' must be established between the years of eighteen and thirty-five. After that, although he may keep up his standard of excellence to a ripe old age, he cannot evolve the type of his individuality.

Some years after the school had got into working order, and was successful as far as it went, the need of a preliminary class was seriously felt. Hitherto, I had accepted candidates simply on a drawing of a head from life, done in charcoal. But I began to feel more and more that such drawings were insufficient proof of the necessary ability to

justify the candidate working at once from the nude figure. Nor could I tell whether the drawings had not been touched by another, and more competent, draughtsman. Only too many of the students that I admitted on the strength of these drawings showed a distressing helplessness when they commenced to work in the life-room. This fact clearly demonstrated that a change of curriculum was necessary, for they lowered the standard of work in the life-class, and were themselves extremely nervous and unhappy.

An additional large room was added to the building, in which both men and women could work together, for the more advanced were separated whilst working in the life-classes. That Continental plan of men and women working in the same room from an entirely undraped male model is a moral iniquity.

I set these 'preliminary students' to paint heads from life (village models), to draw casts in charcoal, and, during the last week of the term, to draw a slightly draped male figure. At the end of the term, three specimens of each student's work (one of each kind) were placed around the room for me to judge,—all without signatures. It was of course a form of competition—so distasteful to me—and I do not say that this plan worked with unvarying justice. The last week's work, particularly, caused some students to be so nervous that they failed utterly. Again, as they were only allowed six 'tries' to get into 'the life,' I found that when some of them had reached their last chance, the anxiety made them positively ill. But I could think of no better plan to free myself from any suspicion of favouritism.

The preliminary class was under the direction of one of my pupils. I had three student-masters in all during the twenty-one years, and they were paid for their services.

The casts from which the preliminary student worked were not from the antique, but were taken from living faces, or after death. In the latter case I carefully selected such as were not unpleasant. These were often from the faces of great personalities, and so gave the student double interest in drawing them. It was the cast of a real face —a piece of nature that the students could understand, and was a natural transition to the living face, which is not the case when students are put to drawing from the antique. At an early age the student is quite incapable of grasping the antique ideal, therefore it does not appeal to him; and this is proved by the fact that no student who is worth his salt ever willingly or enthusiastically works from the antique cast.

The students who had been prepared in this preliminary class caused a marked improvement in the standard of the 'life work.' The change also brought an increased number of students to the school, and in 1893-4 they amounted to nearly one hundred.

But I have been anticipating, and must go back to the year, 1887, when the school stood face to face with a crisis. The neighbour, already referred to, who had erected the buildings, being in some financial difficulty, stated to me that he must sell them, and suggested that I should buy the whole property, and run the school on my own account.

Had I run the school on my own account it would have fatally altered my original position with the students; therefore his suggestion was in no way feasible. He had an alternative scheme, viz. to turn the school into a kind of company—I think they call it 'an educational establishment incorporated under an Act of Parliament'—which would enable him to issue debentures. I cared not what was done so long as the continuance of the school was secured, and the sentiment with which I devoted myself to the students should not be disturbed as far as I was concerned. It so happened, however, that in spite of the issue of debentures far beyond the value of the buildings, the debenture-holders received five per cent. interest on their money up to a short time of my resignation. In the later years I began to feel the strain of teaching more and more; and when the school had reached the twenty-first year of its existence, I considered the moment had arrived when I was justified in resigning my position as head of the Herkomer School.

With my resignation the school ended, and when the buildings came under the hammer they were sold for a mere song. Had the debentures been issued on a fair estimate of the value of the buildings, a substantial sinking-fund might easily have been established which would have made all the difference to the debenture-holders when a dissolution of the school took place.

The school is gone, and there remains but the memory of it; but I believe the aftermath of my influence on so many students will endure. It had realised my dream; it

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had given me an opportunity to put to a practical test my gospel on art teaching, and had enabled me to give vent to a natural desire to teach.

Let me now explain my methods for watching and directing the outside work of the more advanced students. By 'outside work' I mean the work done by those who were painting landscapes, portraits, and subject-pictures in their own studios, independently of school work. Such work was brought to my studio for criticism at given times —generally once a fortnight.

The importance of a little guidance at this stage cannot be overestimated. The student is 'all at sea' at first, and invariably selects some subject far beyond his powers of execution. Allegories, historical subjects, poetic effusions of all kinds, usually attract him in the earliest years. In landscape, on the contrary, he first produces mere 'pochards' or scrappy sketches, without proper selection of subject. Another fault was coarseness in the work. A small oil-sketch, a little larger than the palm of one's hand, would be painted with touches that could only be justified on a six-foot canvas.

CHAPTER V

Probably no master can tell how much, or how little, a student absorbs of his teaching; and it was when I saw this outside work that I realised how many of the students did, or did not, grasp the principles that underlay my criticism of their life-studies.

For instance, in these studies, I pointed out the importance of 'perspective in touch,' without which neither planes can be represented, nor modelling attained. The students soon saw the advantage of this direction when once they grasped the idea of it. I naturally thought they would apply it to their landscape work, in which perspective of touch has an even greater significance than in figure painting. But in this I was sadly disappointed, and to show its entire absence from their work, I first covered up the student's landscape—which represented, let us say, sky, distance, middle distance, and foreground—and then gradually and slowly lowered the covering. By this test they could plainly see that their touches were the same in size from the top to the bottom of the canvas.

It will therefore be seen that it is only by the examination of the student's first independent work, done outside the school, that the master can see how much or how little of his teaching the student has really understood. Hence the advantage of this method of taking the teaching beyond

the school curriculum will be manifest. This also makes it clear that the student, at the beginning of his studies, should not be worried with too many principles. He must first produce a piece of tangible painting, or, I might say, produce a definite 'physical' piece of work, before he can understand. or be interested in, the higher principles of the art. Until that has been accomplished, it is useless to expound them to him. A student in mathematics could not understand the higher problems of his science before he had mastered the elementary principles. It is eminently so with the art student.

The master must watch for the psychological moment when it is expedient and safe to inculcate the broader theories of art. Theory should not precede, but should follow on, practice. I have even found a concurrent exercise of both theory and practice impracticable. The student must 'build up' as it were, on himself first; he must make some edifice in which to house the wider and immovable principles that underlie all monumental art. No master can be the builder of that edifice. If he attempted it, and cast the student forcibly and prematurely into the mystic dwelling, the student would only feel as one who has been thrust into an unfurnished house.

Now I propose for a moment to leave my Gospel and take a breath. Let me tell you something of the students' lives when they left the class-rooms.

In the summer term they made full use of the tennis lawn that adjoins the school. From this lawn there is still a beautiful view across country, reaching to St. Albans;

and the tower of its Abbey can be distinctly seen on a clear day. When the model rested, there was a rush into the fresh air, as the unavoidable heat of the life-rooms sorely tried the students. There, on the grass, they sat or lounged, or lay at full length—the whole scene looking like a picnic of young people. Few of the men put on their coats, preferring to enjoy the cooler and purer air in their shirt-sleeves. The women wore their various coloured pinafores, all bedaubed with paint. It is strange that the majority of women students are untidy workers. In going round their class, it needed some careful piloting not to run against overfilled brushes, or stumble over paint-boxes and odd brushes on the floor. There never was the semblance of a clean hand amongst them. I would not even like to vouch for their faces. But on this subject I must say no more, or I may get into trouble.

Although there was no time for a game of tennis at that hour, there were many impromptu games enjoyed; even a chess-board might have been seen supported on the knees of two squatting students; and when the so-called 'Boss of the week' called out 'time,' there was the return to work — perhaps not quite so precipitately as when they rushed out, but they went back invigorated and refreshed.

Then came three o'clock, and most students were off to their lodgings for tea. Those who had received a good 'crit' (as they called my criticism) were in high spirits; others, less fortunate, were gloomy, disappointed, and irritable, and the poor landladies had to stand the brunt

AUGUST
SEPTEMBER

of their mood; the tea was bad, the jam execrable, and the bread tasteless. Perhaps another unhappy student, carefully selected, was taken home for mutual commiseration. The studies hung up on the walls of the lodging were duly examined, and one that had received the 'Boss's' approval compared with the one severely criticised that day. Of course, for the time being, the last study was the better in their eyes—an opinion all the more strongly insisted upon because the student knew in his heart that he was wrong, and that I was right. 'Oh! no,' they were not going out sketching that day; weather not right, and sketch in too beastly a state to go on with; a game of tennis is proposed, and that was the great relief for their feelings, as could be witnessed by the vicious serving.

The women, perhaps, return to the general reading-room to sing, or play the piano. Perhaps a students' concert (for which I always lent my theatre) was in contemplation, and an attempt at a rehearsal might be made.

At seven o'clock they returned to the school for the drawing from the nude. But it did not end the day when they left at nine o'clock. Two or three, or even more, might meet in a lodging, and after a light refreshment, settle down to sketch each other, having perhaps in view a contribution to the school magazine, called *The Palette*. This was a manuscript magazine, issued monthly, and was at first edited by a student. Later on I undertook to edit it, and to select from the proffered drawings and other contributions. The change became advisable, as it was found that the necessary censorship gave the student-editor

rather a hot time of it. There are many reproductions in this volume selected from that magazine.

It will be imagined that the village benefited largely by the presence of the students. The old people who could do no work obtained sittings, for which they were well paid; the tradespeople, the house owners, and the villagers who had rooms to let—all were benefited. It meant at least £10,000 a year to the place. The dissolution of the school has not altered the source of income for these people, as a great many studios have been added of late years, and they are always occupied. They number about one hundred. Whilst the school was under my name it was an unwritten law that only students who had been through the school should occupy these studios. The students themselves were anxious that there should be no 'cuckoos.' This was a safeguard, as a student, or a young painter, not connected with the school, might have brought in a dangerous element, and have caused dissension.

Let me here state that the conduct of the male students towards the village girls was without reproach. In the case of one student, who was expelled from the school, it must be stated that the reason for his dismissal was in no way connected with any inhabitant of Bushey. In this case, however, the men came to me in a body to tell me of the event, and after I had expelled the man from the school, which was all I had the power to do, they, on their own account, made him understand that he had better leave the locality. The honour of the place was in their hands, and they guarded it worthily.

Of frivolous flirtation amongst themselves there was

HORSES BATHING IN THE SEA

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From the oil painting by Lucy E. Kemp-Welch, R.B.A.

next to none. Naturally, where so many young people are thrown together, friendships between the sexes must take place, and it is but a short journey from a friendship to an engagement, and from that to marriage.

But when a female student married, she was no longer eligible for the school. The women were in great fear that I should turn them out of the school when they became engaged, and they tried hard to keep the matter secret from me.

From the start I refused to take married women. And many an unpleasant interview have I had with importunate married women, who wished to study under me. One couple who had come to Bushey from the Continent for the wife to enter the school actually took a house in the village before inquiring whether I took married women or not. Another lady came with her husband, who seemed in the depths of misery at the idea of his wife studying in the 'life.' The statement that married women were ineligible for my school had scarcely passed my lips when his entire expression changed, and he beamed with delight. The wife's last appeal was: 'But I am so fond of drawing; what am I to do if I cannot study?' That was easily answered: 'Devote your life to the happiness of your husband and children.' The husband lingered a little after his angry wife had passed out of my drawing-room, and pressed my hand with great warmth, saying: 'You have once and for all settled a dreadful family difference. I shall always be grateful to you.'

I remember another married lady coming to me. She had left her mother in an open carriage at the gate. The

younger lady, who received the same answer as the others, very pathetically urged that she was a widow, and she could not quite see the point that a woman, once married, was always married. She went out to her mother, not in anger, but sorely disappointed. From the window I witnessed a little pantomine, which took place at the carriage-side. The mother, a tall, largely-built, masculine sort of woman, heard the result of the interview with evident indignation. Then she suddenly got out of her carriage with an action that clearly meant: 'Here, let me get at him!' She came up the path with war in every step. Nor did she mince matters when I met her. 'What is the meaning of this, sir? What right have you to deny my daughter entrance to your school simply because she has been married? She has to work for her children, and painting is the only thing she is fit for. It is monstrous, and, to say the least, ungentlemanly on your part.' I was far too amused to be angry; but I confess I got a little anxious when the old lady's face, which on her entering my drawing-room was of an ashy paleness, began to get redder and redder. Hence my palliative answer: 'Madam, it is very complimentary to me that you should be so anxious for your daughter to study art in my school, but my law in respect to married women is irrevocable.' She returned to the attack: 'Why can't you alter it? It is a monstrous law, and I cannot congratulate you on it.' And out she stalked, her back rigid, her head jerking from side to side. Even from the house door, at which I stood, I could hear her fierce order to the driver: 'Back to the station.'

CHAPTER VI

Some difficulties arose from the students desiring to get a livelihood in art before they could produce good work. Many parents, in their innocence, thought that earning money must follow after a short spell of study, and that it was part of my duty to put my pupils in the way of doing so. It never occurred to them to doubt the natural talent of a son or daughter, especially the latter. 'Of course she will become a distinguished painter' was the confident expression, 'she is so fond of painting; and she will get lots of commissions when she exhibits in the Academy.' A mother once wrote to me about her daughter, saying that she had 'now been in the school two months,' and it was time I put her in the way of getting her own living. In addition to teaching in the school, I found I had to interview and teach the parents, to show them how serious it was for a student of talent to be taken away from his or her studies prematurely.

The majority of parents have strange ideas about the practice of art. A fond mother wrote to me, that she thought 'a nice, light occupation like painting would just suit' her son, who was delicate, and, in fact, was 'not quite right in his head.'

Well, I grieve to state that I had students, of talent even, who were not quite right in their heads. In those

twenty-one years of my school's existence there were quite a number of both sexes who showed signs of incipient, or of downright, insanity. In some cases it took alarming forms, as when a half-dressed male student rushed down the High Street of Bushey, brandishing a large carving-knife, or when others threatened my life. Some stole things from the school, others spread lies, or sent offensive, anonymous postcards to the students. There was one curious case of a girl in the preliminary class, who sent me insulting letters—unsigned, of course. I saw her for the first time with her parents at one of my Sunday receptions, a week after she had been admitted to the school, and shook hands with her, as I did with all the visitors; but I had no conversation with her. A few days after that, the first letter came, and then others followed. Through some carelessness on her part in the selection of her messenger, she was soon identified. Of course, I at once sent the letters to her father, who promptly appeared on the scene. But when she heard that her father had arrived, and wished to take her away, she went to bed, and could not be persuaded to get out of it for three days. This could hardly have been the first sign she showed of mental aberration; and in that case the parents ought never to have allowed her to come to Bushey. But the truth is, parents often do not know what to do with an eccentric daughter, and they think any change of occupation will bring about a mental improvement. Hence, if she happens to draw a little, the study of art is advised. Alas, for art!

I may mention one more case, of another girl in the

preliminary class who had a religious mania. She thought it her mission to join the school in order to dissuade the women from drawing and painting from the slightly-draped male model. She looked upon the whole thing from a diseased point of view. This state of affairs soon got to my ears, and I put the question to her in the presence of the class: 'Do you intend to advance to the life-room?' She answered: 'Certainly not, and I have a divine mission to prevent the other women from degrading themselves.' Of course, she was told to leave the school at once; and the atmosphere was again clear and wholesome.

The students who showed abnormal brain symptoms caused me much anxiety, as they were often most difficult to deal with. It will be asked how such cases could make their appearance in an art colony, established on lines so wholesome and healthy. The simple answer is, that these students brought the tendencies with them, and these tendencies would have shown themselves under any circumstances. Although art students are not more prone to disorders of the brain than students in any other department of study, they certainly are under special disadvantages in possessing the artistic temperament, without which no artist can succeed. By this statement, it must not be understood that I consider the artistic temperament necessarily implies the ability to succeed in art. Many people who never practised art have the artistic temperament. The Germans call such a person a 'Schön-geist'—a class that the practising artist greatly relies on for appreciation. The ridiculous language, attitudes, and costumes of the

æsthetic cult that made its appearance nearly thirty years ago, with its worship of dados, blue china, peacock feathers and lilies, was a warped edition of the 'Schön-geist' type. They were eccentrics, but they had, for all that, a certain degree of the artistic temperament. It cannot be denied, however, that the most highly developed artistic temperaments are dangerously allied to neurosis. This being so, I think these occasional aberrations of the mind in some art students can be accounted for.

I would not like to endorse the oft-repeated statement that neurosis is a sign of degeneration, as history shows that but few brain-workers have made their mark who were not touched by it. But it may be considered as a sign of disproportion between brain activity and bodily stamina. An artist friend of mine, who was in the enjoyment of perfect health, with the physique of an athlete, once told me he envied the neurotics, because they could always work, whereas he was half the time too healthy to work.

CHAPTER VII

A FEW pages back I touched on the wish of the students to make their living in art before they were capable of so doing. I had strong reasons for not extending to them any help in this direction until I saw they were sufficiently advanced to justify it. Yet strange to say, the first work I was able to put into the hands of a student was in a department not taught in the school. It was neither painting nor drawing, but mezzotint engraving.

I had been practising etching for some years, and was just then endeavouring to revive the art of mezzotint engraving as it was done in the early days, on copper—a metal that was abandoned by engravers for steel, which would render more impressions than the softer metal. With the assistance of my printer, I succeeded in coating the surface of the finished engraving on the copper with steel—a process which, up to that time, had only been successfully employed on etched copper plates.

It was about this time that the cleverest student of my first batch, having come to the end of his parents' allowance, consulted me as to what he could do to make some money, as he wished to go on working in the school.

Knowing him to be dexterous in the handling of tools, and to be an excellent draughtsman, I taught him all I knew about mezzotinting, lent him my tools, and gave him

a drawing of mine to engrave. He at once grasped the peculiarities of the material, and succeeded in doing a good plate. A proof of this first plate, accompanied by my recommendation to a publisher, obtained for him a first commission. I considered this student, therefore, launched in life from that moment. Soon after, several other students tried their hands at mezzotint engraving, and they all succeeded. These students have for years been doing the finest mezzotint work of the day, and they obtain high prices for it.

It was prophesied that the mechanical process of photogravure would kill mezzotint engraving. But the continued, and well-paid, commissions my former pupils have received clearly show that this was a false alarm.

As I obtained no help from engravers in the technique of mezzotint engraving, I experimented on my own lines, and many of these experiments were successful. My pupils at once adopted all my innovations, but in every case, in truly Japanese fashion, they 'went one better' on all the points they had learned from me. It was just the same with the cleverest of those students who worked in pencil. To me it was always a pleasure to find a student develop, and improve upon, methods that I had myself practised.

For many years the engraver-pupils always consulted me on starting a plate. We then decided what tool should be used for the rocking of the ground, how many ways it was to be crossed (as the first texture always shows when the lights are scraped down); and with what variety of texture the subject should be treated. This change of

texture made it possible to avoid monotony in passages that particularly required 'crispness,' a quality usually most difficult to obtain in mezzotint, as its specific characteristic is softness. I fear I have just used technical terms that the general public will be unable to follow. But the province of this book is not to make the art of mezzotint engraving, any more than that of painting, clear to the layman; and I ask his indulgence for the sake of the practising student, who will, I hope, see and read these pages—and he will understand.

By this time it got about that I had able students who could be trusted with commissions. For instance, letters came to me with the inquiry whether I had a clever student who could undertake a portrait. My laconic answer was: 'Name me your price, and I will name you the student.' I knew I had students capable of undertaking such work if I helped them. The cheapest would be those who were the most untried; the more expensive those who had had a little experience. They all knew I would get them 'out of the wood,' so to speak, and so there was no want of courage.

When a student obtained a commission for a portrait I attended the first sitting at his studio. I helped him select the pose, choose the best side of the face, and arrange the sitter in the most favourable light; and I suggested an appropriate background. Whilst the portrait was in progress the student constantly brought me his work for criticism, and I always encouraged him to examine his work in my studio, because I knew from experience how easily one may be deceived in the colour and tonality of

a picture begun and finished in the near light of a small studio. Many a surprise was in store for him when he saw his work in the larger space, and the new light; but it was often necessary for me to go to his studio again to see the sitter and the portrait together. On occasions I lent my London studio, as some sitters were too busy to come down to Bushey.

If there was a fault in my method of helping the young portrait-painters, it was that they got on too quickly, and rather missed the support when I gradually withdrew it.

Now, to the student it is a big leap from the painting of a model to the painting of a portrait. A persistent tendency in the school studies, that I could not quite eradicate, reappeared in first efforts at portraiture—a tendency to ugliness. To avoid 'prettiness' they tumbled into the opposite extreme. This tendency gave me much trouble, especially when I found that a whole room of workers—it was generally the women's class-room—would follow the lead of the student who was doing the most ugly study. They thought this was artistic work. Many a time did I 'storm' in the class-room, when I saw such weak-kneed following of a perverse leader, especially as I had taken infinite pains to treat each student as an individuality, and in accordance with his or her special temperament. On these occasions I would have all the studies placed around the room, look for the work of the mischievous leader (which I seldom failed to recognise), and give the students a red-hot talk.

In the vocabulary of correction, some unorthodox terms

I.

were used, such as 'jammy,' 'gummy,' 'wooden,' 'messy,' 'licked-up,' 'ragged,' 'slippery,' 'clumsy,' 'American oil-cloth,' etc. These words look vulgar in print, but spoken, they struck home, and were retained in the memory far better than fine phrases. It was amusing when I asked a woman: 'What did I say of your last week's work?' and got the answer, in a sweet, dulcet voice: 'Jam!'

Perhaps for the student who had so many things to attend to in technique, some excuse can be found if he failed in something. But 'ugliness' in work, even if expressed artistically (and the two can be combined) is unfortunately apt to 'stick.' When they started portrait-painting, in which the selection of the best aspect of the sitter is not only essential, but even a duty, many students found considerable difficulty in shaking off the old disease. They nearly always made the sitter uglier than he was. Well, this failing does not belong to the student alone, but may be found in good painters. A friend of mine in America, who had been painted by an artist given this way, told me that when he first saw the finished portrait, he could not help saying that he saw in that face every oyster he had eaten in his life.

It takes the student some time to learn the real meaning of 'truth in portraiture.' He cannot at first rid himself of the idea that the sitter is merely a model to be copied. Until he can keep a vision persistently in his mind of what he intends to secure, and learn to 'shoot on the wing' (if I may use a sporting term), he will never get away from the model. Diderot tells the story of a fellow-student who

always knelt down to pray before he put a stroke on the canvas, and his prayer was: 'Good Lord, deliver me from the model.'

When I found the student did not possess the faculty for 'catching likeness,' I dissuaded him from going on with portraiture. It goes without saying that this gift is indispensable for portraiture, although it is absolutely distinct from the real art faculty. Many bad draughtsmen, or amateurs who never studied art, can catch a likeness; on the other hand, many a fine painter may utterly fail in that respect. Curiously enough, a portrait can be like, yet not life-like; and, contrariwise, it can be life-like without being a good likeness.

It is said that in looking at the portraits by old masters, one can see that they must be good likenesses. This (as I have just explained) does not in any way follow. And I may safely affirm that in the matter of likeness the old masters had an easier time of it than we have now. I ascribe this to the universal use of the camera, which, misleading as it often is, has nevertheless trained the modern public to a more critical estimate of the likeness. The very urchin in the street has become familiar with the faces of all our public characters, from seeing their photographs in the shop-windows. Every artisan—I would say every intelligent labourer—has photographs taken of his family and of himself; and however poor examples of likeness these may be, they are vastly superior to the old silhouettes, which were the only cheap form of portraiture before the invention of photography.

THE LEPER'S WIFE

From the oil painting by G. Harcourt.

Photography has, therefore, trained the public in 'likeness seeing,' with the result that the portrait painter has to meet much more exacting criticisms in matters of likeness than the painters of earlier days.

When the family and friends of a sitter in former times gave it as their verdict that the portrait was 'a charming picture,' it probably also expressed the satisfaction they felt in the likeness. In modern times, however, the two qualities are separately judged. Thus, we only too often hear the phrase: 'Yes, a charming picture, but not at all like.' Sometimes the visitors in the studio are too polite, or too timid, to make critical remarks about points in the likeness, and take shelter under the simple, and safe, remark: 'It is a fine work of art.' But that is generally a bad sign.

There are always exceptions, and an experience of my own occurs to me as *à propos*. A gentleman who was to be painted full length told me he did not want a likeness; what he wanted was a picture. Yet as the work progressed, and showed signs of becoming a strong likeness, he was more and more interested in the face, and even suggested certain alterations that he thought would improve the likeness. He thus clearly showed that his judgment was, after all, under modern influence.

CHAPTER VIII

When one comes to consider how various are the methods of work practised by painters, methods not learnt in school, one cannot help a doubt crossing one's mind as to the utility of any kind of teaching for the painter in his youth. He no more retains the school methods than the boy retains the copper-plate handwriting learnt at school in England. I say in England, because the German, French, and American nations do not show the variety of handwriting that one finds in this country. That is rather curious, as one would hardly expect these signs of individualism in England, where it is considered to be rather bad form to be original.

Some years ago I came across a teacher who gave lessons to ladies of position in Society, whose education had been neglected. Spelling, writing, and correct speaking were the principal items she taught them. But in the matter of writing she struck a very clever method. She never attempted to teach the ladies the copper-plate handwriting taught in schools, which, as I have said, is never retained in after life: she at once taught a characteristic handwriting that illustrated individualism. To one she would teach the neat hand; to another, the sprawling; to another, the 'giant hand.' In fifty per cent. of the cases of such selection it probably amounted to a great insight into

Aug. 1904.

character, for she at once taught the handwriting that, to her mind, might have been the inevitable one to appear when the individuality of the person asserted itself in later life. It would be interesting to know what those readers of character from handwriting, who do not require to see the writer, would read from these 'taught' characteristic handwritings. If there is anything in such reading of character, it would rather be a feather in the cap of the reader if he detected the characteristics to be assumed, or a feather in the cap of the teacher if a reading endorsed her selection of outward character of a particular person.

What a short cut this process of teaching characteristics (which take long to appear) would be in the matter of art tuition. Instead of painfully searching for the individual idiosyncrasy of a pupil, it would save much anxiety and worry on the part of a master if, on the same lines of procedure, he were to teach his students certain styles of painting, using his own judgment as to the proper selection of student for each style—say, a Pre-Raphaelite style for one, moderate impressionism for another, ultra-impressionism for a third; further, a *blend* of all for a fourth, and so on. Would the world find out the trick? Not if, perhaps, he happened to hit on the right type of work for each student, according to his latent bent. But it would be a hazardous experiment, far more so than in the case of the teacher of original handwriting to ladies of neglected education. In the latter case it was at least only a subterfuge, or, let us say in all kindness, a justifiable deception. It removed a painful onus from their lives: for in life there is no

more damning evidence of illiterateness than a common irregular, *unformed* handwriting. H's may be dropped, and others misplaced in conversation; that might, after all, only be evidence of environment, but common handwriting (not merely illegible) means, without exception, absence of education; whereas a strong, characteristic handwriting, in which the peculiarities are *never varied*, but always insistent, no matter how peculiar (and the more peculiar, the more likely to deceive), could cause bad grammar to be passed over and excused as being only a slip of the pen. But in the art-student's case, it is far more serious, artistically and morally: it would be teaching him deliberately to appear under false pretences. To the ladies before mentioned, it would add an 'embroidery or a ruffle to their raiment'; to the art-student it would add 'chains,' from which he could not hope wholly to free himself, so as to appear honestly himself. He might only succeed in so doing if he possessed exceptional strength of independent talent, in which case he would not have allowed himself to be enslaved at the outset. Such a student adopts none but his own devices. But for the student of average talent such borrowed originality crushes out of him the little resisting powers he may possess. He might as well voluntarily lay his head on the block and ask the master to decapitate him.

The ultimate characteristic of the painter's method of work is a growth, always based on his peculiar bent, which often takes long in ripening; and the ripening cannot be hastened by any forcing-house process: it can

only be the result of the practice of art. I tried to get at this 'bent' at the earliest period of the student's career. But as a student must start on something, it was my endeavour to make that something a form of work that he would not find so difficult to shake off, if he found I had not correctly estimated at the start what his probable bent would be.

We know that painters have changed their technique many times, and such changes have often been brought about by the strangest accidents. It may be some quality seen in the work of a colleague that has turned the scales, some peculiar charm in an 'Old Master'; even some casual remark by an intelligent layman may bring about a change, or some new medium, some new canvas: all these accidents (if they can so be called) are conducive to changes in a painter's method of work, if they happily come to pass at the psychological moment in the painter's mind. Sometimes change of subject, with the requisite new treatment, will put the painter on a new track, advantageous, or the reverse. You will, however, see many changes in a painter's method of painting that have been gradual, almost imperceptible in their progressive stages, and have appeared as his confidence in his power grew, or the appreciation of the public for a particular result increased.

But methods of work are as various as are the temperaments of human beings. The mystery of temperament—or call it a 'person's nature'—is interpreted by that master, Mark Twain, thus: 'Through all this steady drift of evolution the essential detail, the commanding detail, the master

detail of the make-up remains as it was in the beginning, suffers no change and *can* suffer none; the *basis* of the character, the temperament, the disposition, that indestructible iron framework upon which the character is *built*, and whose shape it must take, and keep throughout life. We call it a person's *nature*.'

No period, no school, can remove this indestructible iron framework. Even the tyrannical priesthood, who governed the art type of a certain period, did not succeed in preventing Giotto from developing his natural bent. Michael Angelo broke away from traditional art, and evolved a new one, his own self, the outcome of his *nature*. This indestructible iron framework, however, is made of many parts, some of which have to be covered with 'paint,' as they would not bear the searching light of day. The conventional forms of life, as well as its conflicting interests, make up the ingredients of this paint. Veit Stoss, the great carver of the Middle Ages, was branded for forgery, but the paint would not hide the brand. Benvenuto Cellini was particularly proud and happy when he killed a man. He boasted of it; but such was the state of society in his day, and in the country in which he lived, that no *paint* was needed. Michael Angelo, that austere Colossus, who lived alone with his art, had a distinctly sly side to his nature. I wonder if it is generally known to what tricks he resorted in order to circumvent the command from the Pope to decorate, in fresco, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, although the Pope knew he had set his heart on a great scheme of sculpture? He had

THE LATE T. H. WORRALL

From the oil painting by D A. Wehrschmidt.

not painted frescoes, and did not want the job. But as he was not let off, he bethought himself of some way by which he could prove to the Pope that he did not understand the necessary technique. So, when he had covered some space, he asked for a visit from the Pope, that he could see with his own eyes that he was blundering with the material. Naturally, the Holy Father did not mount the scaffolding, but from below he could distinctly see that Michael Angelo's work was already *cracking*. A few years ago, this ceiling was being restored, and a friend of mine was privileged to examine, at close quarters, these incomparable frescoes. He then saw many cracks, natural cracks, but he also saw that nearly half the cracks were *cracks painted* by *Michael Angelo himself*. Clever trick, but futile, fortunately for the future generations.

Now, the extraordinary variety of types of art-work to be seen in a modern exhibition is owing to the absence, in this age, of all conventional restraint. Every individual painter starts right away on his indestructible iron framework without any consideration of its durability or staying power; hence more catastrophes take place nowadays than in former times. How often do we find a modern painter spoken of as the painter of *one* picture! He leaped with one effort on to that plateau, and then stuck there, being unable to get higher, or return to his starting-point. He starves and dies there. He could still be seen by the crowds who watched him from below, but no help could have reached him: every move would have had to come from his own initiative.

Speaking more technically, the artist's temperament is the power that moves the machinery of the methods of work, and he may engineer this department very early in his life: so early that he gets into habits not easily moved, unless he possesses a species of the inventor's faculty, which is everlastingly seeing fresh possibilities for improvement.

In methods of technical procedure, one painter will make a careful outline in pencil of his sitter's face on the canvas, and then cautiously proceed, bit by bit. Starting, we will say, on one eye, he will finish that eye and an inch or so around it, in one sitting, and perhaps never touch it again. He proceeds in the same manner until the whole face is there, every touch on the white canvas jealously watched for purity of colour. This artist proceeds in this way whether it be on a canvas of two feet or one of ten feet. Such a method can give great charm artistically, but it is hard to see how a painter, working in this mosaic way, can catch the fleeting expression of a sitter, which only comes at intervals and quickly disappears again. Another painter cannot endure a clean white canvas to start on, and I know of one able German painter who painted a portrait of the German Emperor over a study of an old woman. But as all such under-work in oil-colour eventually 'comes through' and shows on the surface, future generations will wonder what the German Emperor had to do with that old woman. A horse in an equestrian portrait by Velasquez has six legs, caused by the correction being made without the necessary removal

of the underneath paint. If you take the trouble to look at names repainted, with new ones, over shop windows, you will often find the former proprietor endeavouring to assert himself again.

Further, there are painters whose method is to finish a face at one painting, that is, whilst the paint is still wet. This necessitates long sittings, which may try the sitter's patience, and so materially affect the expression. An animated conversation can be kept up for an hour in a studio, to accompany work; but after that it is somewhat of a strain on both painter and sitter. If conversation flags, the latter is apt to get sleepy, and away goes the painter's chance of securing an animated face. With this sleepiness, the very lines of the features alter, and baffle the painter in the mere matter of drawing; and however artistic the technique may become by that longer operation, the artist is not so likely to be able to 'get at' the personality of the sitter. Well, it seems to me just as well not to leave the personality of a sitter out of his portrait.

The 'long sitting' method of finishing a whole face in one sitting would greatly depend on 'emotional virtuosity' in order to attain the technique aimed at; and it necessitates the painter being in just the right mood and state of health (if not on other conditions) for the special moment. Such enforced exciting moments take much pleasure from the practice of painting.

MY SCHOOL AND MY GOSPEL

CHAPTER IX

There are so many things a portrait painter has to learn from experience, so many for which he has to wait, that a student can save himself much time by obtaining advice upon certain details, which, small as they may be, are certainly of importance. Take, for example, the mere chair in which he places his sitter. That may be quite inappropriate for his figure, and constrain him into an unnatural position. Further, the platform on which the sitter is placed may be too high or too low. If he is placed too high—that is, if his face is too much above the level of the painter's eyes as he stands to his work—serious difficulties at once arise. Let us suppose, for instance, that the sitter has a large forehead. When looking up at him, we find the forehead foreshortened, and this entirely changes its proportion. If we paint what we see from that point of view, everybody will say we have made his head too small. Yet we have faithfully given the proportion as it appeared in that view from below. But the mistake was to place a man who had a large head in such a position as to neutralise his principal characteristic. Again, the background in a portrait remains a worry to the painter throughout his life. Titian is supposed to have said that anybody can paint a head, but few can do satisfactory backgrounds. This must seem strange to the layman, who

always thinks that pupils paint in that part of a portrait and that it is of small importance.

I remember Millais once showing me in his studio a lady's portrait that had given him special trouble in the selection of a background. At the time it was of a curious purple tone—evidently an experimental colour. He said: 'That's the tenth background I have painted into that portrait, and now it is not right.'

If a young painter starts on a portrait before he has a definite pictorial scheme in his mind, he is sure to get into difficulties with the background. In every respect restraint is hard for the student to learn. It was ever so in the school. The moment the model was posed, there was a precipitous beginning of the charcoal outline, before the type of the figure, or the peculiarities of the colour of the model had been grasped. I sometimes came into the class-room just as the students started on such a mad rush. They sang, whistled, and made all sorts of noises in the wild 'charge' with their charcoals on the canvases. I had sometimes to positively shout my, 'Halt, all of you,' for they were too excited to notice my entry. Such a check somewhat damped their enthusiasm for the time being, but it soon returned, and was under better control at the second start.

'The more haste, the less speed' is an old adage, most applicable to portrait painting. But that necessary holding back all the time, in order to keep judgment cool, so as to minimise the chances of failure, is often very irritating. The portrait painter is expected to be sure of hand, and up

to concert pitch at all times. How much easier it is for the landscape painter, whose failures need never be known, whose struggles with his work need have no witness. He need never restrain himself; he can always 'let himself go,' particularly when he is sketching some transient effect in nature. In that effort, likeness plays no part; he is only making suggestive memoranda for something that his mind has conceived. He sees something beyond what he is sketching. The portrait painter, on the other hand, is bound down to his subject, which must be so represented that all intelligent people can at least recognise it. If he misses the likeness, and defends his failure by saying, it is what *he sees*, a consensus of opinion will declare that he sees wrongly.

How free is the landscape painter, how untrammelled by irritating human influence! He has only the elements of nature to interrupt his work, yet they, in their very changefulness, are always suggesting something to his receptive mind. Then he has but one public to work for, whereas the portrait painter has two (whose verdicts on his work often diametrically contradict each other), viz.: the general public, and the family and relatives of the sitter.

I would not for worlds take from the art of portrait painting its many advantages, its privileges, its human interest, and its historical significance; but one cannot help envying, at least, the landscape painter's freedom in the choice of his hours of work. He is not tortured by appointments, nor compelled to be ready to do his best

THE HON. CHARLOTTE CLIVE

By permission of
Messrs. P. and D. Colnaghi and Co.

From the mezzotint engraving
by D. A. Wehrschmidt.

work at a given hour in the day. Again, changeful nature is never so trying as a bad sitter, or one whose expression is ever changing. True, he has discomforts while working out of doors; in the summer, flies and midges; in the autumn, rheumatism; in the winter, colds.

Well, we must all practise the art that we can do *best*; and we can only relieve our minds by grumbling when we find we cannot succeed in everything. And although the public is full of prejudice, is led by fashion, and, as Canova said, 'sees with its ears,' somehow or other this public manages to nail down a painter to the kind of art that he *can* do best. Perhaps without this tyranny the painter might be long in finding out his real sphere in art. That most admirable sea-painter, Mr. Napier Hemy, who studied in Baron Leys' studio, told me it took him twenty years to find out that the sea was his *métier*. In this case, I would take the master's teaching to have been at fault; it was the public, however, that pointed to the direction of his real talent by its patronage of his sea-pieces.

It is a noteworthy fact, that, after long study from the life in a school, students will take up some other branch of art to which their taste, or capacity, leads them. Pupils of mine who were only taught to draw and paint the human figure have become landscapists and animal painters. I could only guide the work of the latter in a general way, as I am not a painter of animals; in my whole career I have painted one horse (and that in the distance of a landscape), two cats, a couple of dogs, and a few Bavarian oxen pulling carts.

Of course, if a figure painter had to do an animal, as a serious part of a subject, he would work from nature until he succeeded in getting the animal to look right. But ask any figure painter who has not actually drawn or painted animals to draw some given creature from memory, and you will have a surprise. The memory of a painter can only become a useful factor if he has drawn or painted (and that frequently) the objects to be stored up in it. Merely to look at nature is not sufficient. I have looked again and again at my Jersey cows and calves with artistic delight, but I could not draw one from memory any more than I could a monkey.

That reminds me of a story. A distinguished English figure painter was once visiting a Continental zoological garden. He wanted to find the monkey-house, but could not make himself understood by the attendant. The bright thought then struck him that he would use the universal language of art. He sketched a monkey's head, and showed it to the attendant. The latter seemed at once to understand, and led the way—not, however, to the monkey-house, but, alas! to the abode of the hippopotamus. So much for the universal language.

That the human form is the basis of all art study there can be no manner of a doubt. But after mastering the human form, it does not follow (as figure painters are apt to assert) that one can paint anything,—I mean, of course, in such manner that it may rank with the highest achievements in any department of pictorial art. For example, I cannot call to mind a landscape by the hand of a

figure painter that could be called monumental, or a consummation of the art of landscape painting, such as we acknowledge a great Turner landscape to be. The work of the figure painters in this domain has seldom transcended the poetic transcript of 'a bit of nature.' Millais' beautiful landscape, 'Chill October,' will at once be cited as a contradiction to my statement; but it is just this picture (which stands quite alone amongst figure painters' landscapes) that has led me to my conclusion. Masterly in painting, poetic in feeling, it still remains a transcript of a given section of nature. It can make no claim to composition, and its sky is a non-essential. The happy title, 'Chill October,' has, however, given the landscape its finishing touch of poetry. I can think of no other picture that has been so enhanced by a title. Having in mind my admiration for Millais as a painter, and my love for him as a man, it may be felt that I have overstepped the lines of good taste in my criticism. But having launched out in an argument in support of a conviction, my only safety is in honestly stating my thoughts.

How is it to be explained that figure painters have so seldom attempted to paint landscape, pure and simple? They have combined figure with landscape over and over again, or, I should rather say, introduced landscape as background to figure subjects. But of landscapes, possessing their own interest, and having their own mission, unaided by human interest,—how many can be enumerated from the figure painter's hand? There must be other than commercial reasons for this omission, because the figure

painter admires, and loves, nature as much as the landscape painter. No effect, when out of doors, escapes his eye; he is, perhaps, of all individuals to be counted the greatest appreciator of landscape work.

Some explanation may be found in the distinct difference of 'seeing' between the painters of the two types of art. The figure painter looks more for objects to paint in nature that are near,—the other, for those that are distant. The first-named starts his subject with a foreground that is within a few yards of his feet, whereas the landscapist often takes a point of sight from which he looks down on to the foreground, which enables him to represent more adequately the vastness of a great scene. We see this in Turner again and again. In such landscapes the foreground is a mere introduction to the distance, and does not constitute a feature in the subject.

I do not wish to imply that only landscape-painting figurists paint objects in a landscape that are near; that would be an absurd assertion, and altogether contrary to facts. I only wish to make it clear that they avoid, almost systematically, the greatest difficulty of the landscape art, by seldom attempting sky and distance, and this differentiates them by sharp lines from landscape painters proper, who paint everything, and every effect, in nature.

In addition to a difference of 'seeing' between the painters, there is also a difference in methods of work. Speaking for myself, I practically needed nature for every touch, and I cannot think I am singular in this respect

MORNING

From the oil painting by Arnesby Brown, A.R.A.

amongst my brother-figurists, who paint landscapes. But this failing led me to copy nature too closely throughout, and many a valuable lesson have I received on the varnishing day of the Academy, from a colleague (a landscape painter) who, by taking a large brush, and obliterating certain 'over-painted' parts in my landscapes, brought into greater prominence the essentials of the subjects.

To paint vast nature, in all its changing expressions of cloud and light, the painter's mind must be stored with a mass of facts which he has accumulated by years of sketching, note-taking, and observation. The figure painter who is accustomed to his model, and to having nature always before him, has by his habits of work become unfitted for the education of memory. He selects, accordingly, scenes that are not subjected to changes.

The fact is, we figure painters like to be comfortable whilst at work, and we drag studios with us whenever we paint a serious landscape. We also choose an effect, as I have said, that is more or less constant. In the Walker period, the 'grey day' (most constant in this country) was in high favour. Further, we avoid sky.

This shirking of sky constitutes a characteristic that separates us most widely from the landscape painter proper. We cannot work from rapidly executed sketches, or from slight memoranda, because we have not sufficiently stored in our minds nature's ever-varying effects; we have, in fact, had no time to do so. Hence, we must fix upon nature in its simple garb. But this precludes

those effects which alone can arouse the imagination of the beholder and make him dream.

In the multitude of modern students, I see little chance of finding one who can render this aspect of nature ; and I base my conclusions, not alone on the kind of study they are put to in art schools, *i.e.*, painting from the human figure (as Turner and other landscapists began their training in the life-room), but chiefly on the mischievous use of the camera, which weakens observation and paralyses energy.

Photography has never helped the landscape painter. I will not say that it has not suggested something to the figure painter, especially in street groups or even in portraiture. But in any case, it can only be a useful adjunct, and that only if the painter can do without it, or if it comes to his aid in later life. In the student years it is a false and misleading guide; and it is fortunate if the student cannot afford to buy a photographic apparatus.

When Turner made those wonderful pencil outlines, he actually anatomised the scene as he was drawing it, which fixed it in all its intricate details on his mind, perhaps more firmly than if he had been disturbed by the worries of colour in a first direct effort to work from nature. The student with the camera laughs at such labour, with the inevitable result that the great art finally turns the laugh against him.

It was to be expected that my students who branched out into landscape work should look at nature as with the

IN THE CONVENT CHURCH, LANDSBERG-AM-LECH, BAVARIA

By kind permission of the Rt. Hon. Lord Burton.

From the water-colour painting by W. B. Bennett.

figure painter's eyes, and choose subjects such as I described when I analysed the figure painter's landscape. The example of my own work in landscape may have, in some way, influenced them, although I did my utmost to impose on them nothing of my taste in selection.

I believe my methods of proceedure for landscape painting were the most cumbersome ever adopted. When I mention that they necessitated elaborate tents for living purposes, and movable painting-huts, all such as would resist the rough weather in the wildest parts of North Wales during the months of March, April, and the beginning of May, it will be understood what I mean by cumbersome. On one occasion, near Lake Idwal, our camp consisted of four large tents, housing ten people, with two painting-huts, which, with the tents, and the many things connected with our painting, and domestic necessaries, weighed ten tons. Everything was loaded into pantechnicons and sent by rail, then drawn by horses to the spot of our intended encampment, or as near it as possible, for we always settled on the side of a mountain, on a spot where drinking-water was ready to hand.

Camping out always sounds enticing; but if it is to be done with any chance of success, especially in North Wales at the time of the year we chose, much thought has to be given to the construction of the tents. An ordinary bell-tent would be no better than an umbrella in those regions. Two young artists tried the experiment (and in summer-time too) not far from our settlement. They thought it was 'awfully jolly,' and enjoyed the calm evening of their

first day, smoking their cigarettes, and talking enthusiastically of the work they were going to do. Still full of the novelty, they lay down on the waterproof-covered ground beneath the tent, and fell into a blissful sleep. All of a sudden a tremendous wind sprang up, with heavy rain. Away went the bell-tent, taking with it their clothes, canvases, paint-boxes, and what not. They groped about in the dark for their various garments, but it was impossible to get together an entire suit, as they could not strike a light to aid them in their search. In a half-dressed state, and wet to the skin, they arrived at the nearest house, at three o'clock in the morning. With some assistance they gathered together their scattered properties, and took the first train back to London, vowing never to try the experiment again.

Knowing the treachery of the Welsh weather in spring, my first thought was to acquire a tent that would not be blown away over our heads. I went to the best tent-makers of the day, and explained what I wanted. They constructed a tent that proved in every way successful. Not a peg that held down the innumerable ropes was loosened during the stormy nights. The first night my friend and I certainly sat up awaiting disaster. But when the resisting power of the tent was proved, I slept through all the terrible thunders of the fly-sheet above us, and was surprised in the morning to hear that it had been a 'dreadful night.'

The tent my friend and I occupied was sixteen feet long, and eight feet wide, having four plate-glass windows,

and a wooden floor raised from the ground. The bed-cots, with flat mattresses and curtains all round, hung at either end of the tent. They were rather high up from the floor, necessitating quite a leap to get into them; but once there no bed could have been more comfortable, or more free from draughts. The sides of the tent were double, and there was as a special precaution an extra fly-sheet over the roof, and it was this sheet that made all the noise on stormy nights. An under-gamekeeper of my friend's attended to us and did the cooking. He was quite a character, and his particular fancy was to keep all the tea-leaves from our tea-pot and boil them. If ever there was a poisonous drink it was the tea he consumed, taken from those boiled leaves. However, it was alcohol that killed him a few years later, and not the tea.

We used petroleum stoves for heating and for cooking, and brought the oil in a large barrel, which took some engineering to get up the mountain-side. The natives thought it was beer, and an attempt was made one dark night to tap the barrel. It occurred once, but never after.

The tents occupied by my family (including my two children), and that in which my father lived, were constructed on the same principles, but with variations in the interior arrangements.

We took a store of tinned food with us, and conscientiously buried the empty cans,—which, however, were unearthed by the hungry shepherd dogs when we left. We obtained meat and fresh vegetables daily through our special messenger, who also brought us newspapers and

letters, and posted those we wrote, which were not many. We were therefore within reach of civilisation, yet completely away from it.

The painting huts were substantially constructed of wood, but so made that no part was too heavy for one man to carry. They were eleven feet long by eight feet, and the whole of one side was of glass. But the chief feature was the arrangement for turning this glass side to any point of the landscape. The weight was taken by a pivot fixed in the centre of the bottom framework, and balanced by the wheels, which ran on a small circular iron track. In this hut I painted several landscapes of ten feet six in length. The last I painted, entitled 'Found,' hangs in the Tate Gallery—a scene taken at a spot between Portmadoc and Beddgelert.

We settled in these camps for ten or more weeks, staying indeed until the change of season drove us away. Ten weeks before one subject, working on one large canvas! That surely is an unusual procedure! But it was a delight, and an education; it gave us health, and entertainment in our fight with the elements. On returning home, we found the life in a house almost unbearable at first: we could not breathe in rooms.

What English landscape painter does not know this region of Lake Idwal, with its forbidding aspect, and its utter absence of all leafage? Impressive and almost terrifying under certain conditions of cloud and wind,—that amphitheatre of dark rock, sloping down to the black pool of Idwal, cannot be grasped in all its character by the

casual visitor, be he painter or layman. He must *live* there. He must be able to linger after the sun has cast its last rays, in a single line of red, across the grim 'Devil's Kitchen'—with all the rest in deep gloom. He must be able to watch the wind-swept clouds tearing across the face of the moon at night; and he must be a witness to the dawn, with its low-lying mists that change the familiar scene out of all recognition. Then he will begin to grasp the essentials of that poetic spot. I doubt if it has been rendered adequately by the painter's art. The early Welsh bards gave its character in words. It was certainly felt by Taliesin, when he thundered out his 'Ode to the Wind,' in the seventh century. No change has taken place in the aspect of Idwal since those days; and beyond a fallen rock or two, it is now as it was when the giant bard stood there to deliver his message. Idwal must be seen in its wild mood. In the soft, sunny days of summer it carries a false face—as false as the face of a woman who is rouged and powdered.

CHAPTER X

I WOULD like to linger a little longer in that region of rock and romance, but if the reader has become impatient, I suggest that he should skip this short chapter.

There are few subjects in nature more fascinating to us figurists than rock. Its form attracts us, as there is something tangible to draw. Its colour interests us, because it is subject to great variation, through changes of light upon it; and, in addition to form and colour, the lichen upon the rock delights us. I would say, lichen is the great decorator of nature; it beautifies the clumsiest and most commonplace of objects; and if it disturbs form, it removes monotony. Examined closely it will be seen to be one of nature's most beautiful growths. The broad-leafed lichen that grows on the spruce-stem has inspired designers of the fifteenth century, and from it they evolved Gothic detail.

To make rock painting convincing, some method of procedure has to be adopted for working out-of-doors in comfort. To work from hasty sketches is not satisfactory, as those sketches, to be of use, must have more detail in them than would be required in the final work. Then why do the rock twice over? The second edition is sure not to be so fresh as the first. Gainsborough was satisfied (so tradition has it) to paint the rocks he introduced into his landscapes from broken bits of coal

out of the handy scuttle. But his landscapes were purely conventional, and in them realism would have been misplaced. Such treatment, however, misses the one great characteristic of rock—weight.

It is not my purpose here to go into the vexed, and variously interpreted, question of the conventionality in art. I will only say that I acknowledge its potency and permanency as a force in art. To paint rock convincingly, however, I fear there is no alternative but to settle down before it, even as the portrait painter has to settle down with his sitter before him. No doubt this method involves some loss of time, as realism in the painting must still wear the mantle of grace —the effect of light; and every observer knows that effects of light in nature are as fleeting as the expressions on a human face. The painter must have the patience to wait and watch, and not expect to be always *doing*, though he may sometimes find it irritating when the wind blows persistently from the wrong quarter. The portrait painter has the advantage of being able to force the return of the one expression he has selected to paint, by means of that powerful engine—conversation.

But the rock painter, well housed and protected from the inclemency of weather, need grumble but little at having to wait for his effect. There is, moreover, always something to go on with when nature sulks, and is disobliging. There is the preparation for the coming moment of import—the underlying work, so to speak, which is to receive the final rapid touch when the selected effect suddenly makes its appearance.

After these assertions, figure painters will challenge me to answer the question, why a landscape, painted under these circumstances, should not reach the highest planes of the art. Of course it may, as far as painting, *per se*, goes. It reaches, given skill in the painter, even a higher standard of painting than is generally found in the works of the landscape painter proper. There will always be an honoured place for the poetic realistic transcript of nature, whether done by figure painters or landscapists.

But what of great imaginative landscape? Is that doomed? Things look very much as though it were, and I fear we are slipping back to a period when the leader of taste declared that a picture should be like an old fiddle—brown.

MISS COUSSMAKER

CHAPTER XI

I WILL now devote a few chapters to the theatrical experiments I made in Bushey, for they had, without doubt, an educational influence on my students. They were lessons in 'picture making,' all the more striking because these lessons were in actuality. And although these performances must be classed as belonging to the recreative side of the students' lives, they were carried out in as serious a spirit as was their work, and have remained a source of delightful memory to those who took part in them.

Music-plays, to be given in a theatre of my own, and under my sole direction, had been my dream from earliest youth. When I was but a lad, my father once asked me what I should do if I suddenly came to be possessed of wealth. I answered that I should have a private orchestra, to play when, and what, I liked, perhaps even my own compositions, and also have a private theatre. But I suppressed the ever-recurring craving for the realisation of my dream during the whole period in which I was making my career as a painter—suppressed it for twenty and more years. Had I allowed myself to indulge in these extraneous fancies, I should most assuredly have fallen between two stools, as no man can make a career in two arts simultaneously; and the actors might have praised my painting, and the painters my acting.

But when I had gained my position as a painter, I could gratify my love for music and drama without risk to my career. Whatever time was given to music-writing, to the building up of the stage picture and to the rehearsals, I never neglected my painting for a moment. It was perhaps burning the candle at both ends, but, to repeat what I said in a former page, 'I would do it all again, given youth and strength.'

Say what you will, man is a pleasure-seeking animal. This assertion must not be paraphrased to: man is a seeker of animal pleasure. But there is in every temperament a need (*Drang*) that cries out for pleasure. It may take a good, or a bad, form, but man's will has been given him to determine its proper course. A lady novelist once put the question to me: 'What do you consider the principal thing man strives for in life?' I answered, 'Pleasure.' 'Then what do you consider the greatest, and most lasting, pleasure?' I said, 'Work.' Work has been to me the elixir of life: it has carried me through years of bad health, through sorrows and trouble; and it has steadied me in moments of unexpected success. I utter a platitude when I say that work begets work, just as idleness begets idleness. When once work has taken pleasurable possession of the individual, greed follows, and cries out for more. Greed is born of abnormal activity, and can be met with in all kinds of mental and physical conditions. But all this is temperamental; it may also be said that the desire for work—for production—does not depend on opportunity alone: the greedy worker makes the opportunity.

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It may, or may not, be a virtue, but abnormal activity was born in me, and has constantly broken out in an inevitable greed for work; and there is no getting away from original idiosyncrasy. A writer once called me a 'glutton for work,' and I think he was pretty near the mark. Having such a temperament, I never hesitated to add labour to my already full life; in this case it was a labour of love, of excitement, and of novelty. Without neglecting my art for one moment, I plunged full-heartedly into the theatrical venture, and carried my students along with me in my enthusiasm. So much at least was clear to me in these theatricals—the aim was to satisfy the painter's vision. It was to be a reproduction of nature, as the painter sees it, and not to be the semblance of nature usually seen and accepted on the stage.

None of us knew anything about traditional stage-craft, consequently we started, of necessity, with a clean slate. Ways and means had to be freshly invented, and not copied from methods long practised on the stage. And as I wanted to produce certain effects which I had not, so far, seen truthfully represented, I felt, and we all felt, a desire to do the thing ourselves without the help of the professional stage carpenter, scenic artist, and lime-lightist. Without even inquiring how these traditional workers might have been of help, we so believed in our skill that the very thought of professional aid gave us a pang of jealousy. So we experimented, tried methods, failed, and tried again—until success crowned our labours.

My fellow-workers consisted of my own special staff of

workmen, who were with me during the building of my house—carvers, carpenters, and a smith; and the students were called in for painting purposes. The reputation of the plays enacted in the Herkomer Theatre of Bushey clearly rests on the second essay, called *An Idyl: A Pictorial Music-Play.* In this experiment, there was no attempt to give it opera form, therefore 'pictorial music-play,' as it was called, is its proper definition. The first word denotes the plastic picture; the second, the musical sounds that are to attune one to the picture; and finally, the word play, to give sufficient motive for the display of the two arts—painting and music.

As for my music, it may be as well to explain that, although I had no proper training as a musician, I was always intimately connected with that art. From my eighth to my fourteenth year, I was constantly performing in my mother's pupil-concerts. Indeed, my first performance on the piano was at the age of five, but I was in no way an infant prodigy. However, at one time, it was just a question whether I should be brought up as a musician or not; and had it not been for my father tenaciously holding on to his intention that I should be a painter (ay—and through the hardest struggles of life), perhaps I might have taken to the sister art. Although at my birth my father gave utterance to a prophetic sentence, which has come true, 'This boy shall be a painter, and my best friend,' he often said in after years, that if he had beforehand seen the many struggles that even successful painters went through, and the innumerable failures where

talent seemed to justify an expectation of success, he would have hesitated to pronounce such emphatic words.

But music has always been a part of my life, and there is always some musical phrase (sometimes a very silly one) running in my head when I am painting; and contrariwise, I am always mentally drawing some form when I happen to be writing music. I leave the explanation of this dual condition to scientific men; I simply state a fact.

As for the music I wrote for *An Idyl*, Dr. Hans Richter was so satisfied with the score, that he generously conducted all the thirteen performances, and several orchestral rehearsals. This was an honour, and a significance, I did not fail to appreciate. We all worshipped Richter; his very presence had a magnetic effect upon us.

The warm-hearted appreciation meted out to us by the invited audiences, and the kind notices given us, practically by the whole press, certainly made us a bit giddy. We stared at each other with surprised faces, before we began to realise that a success hardly hoped for had been gained. I cannot say that we lost our heads; but for days we walked as if on air, and it was truly a dangerous moment for us all. We slept off our intoxication, however, and made further strenuous efforts to look for faults and flaws that could be removed.

The audience, as I have said, came by invitation; but we also announced a charity performance. On the occasion of the advertised performance for charity of *The Idyl*, plans of the seats, with the tickets for sale, were

placed with three different agents in Watford. When my secretary went to purchase some tickets from one of these agents, he was astonished to find that the whole of the seats for disposal there had been bought up by one man, who had paid for them with a cheque: on inquiry at the other places he heard the same story. So he brought the three cheques to me and explained the situation. It was evident that some one was making a corner in these seats. Sure enough, an advertisement appeared in the local paper, offering the five-shilling seats for ten shillings and sixpence and the others in proportion. Now the question was, how to checkmate this greedy move. First of all the three cheques were paid into the bank, to secure the money. Then I immediately advertised three more charity performances, and naturally people at once bought tickets for these extra performances, rather than pay the high prices for the 'cornered' performance. The consequence was, that in a few days I had a request from the man who had bought up the tickets, asking me to take them back, and in the end I bought back a number of five-shilling tickets for three shillings and sixpence each, with the result that the charity fund got all the benefit out of this attempted deal, and the crafty speculator lost heavily.

But I have passed on to the most important play, before I have described the initial experiment that led up to it. To this I will now revert.

In my readings of psycho-physiological works, I have not yet found an explanation of that mysterious cerebral condition, when a man suddenly feels he is ripe for a

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certain mental action. A stray word from another person may effect the ignition in the brain, and cause all the faculties required for that mental action to spring into life. It was ever so with me. A word from a colleague started my etching period; a word pointed to, and set me on to, enamelling; a word (and that from my eldest son, when he was only a Harrow boy) proclaimed the moment for the theatrical venture; even this book is the outcome of a word from a literary friend.

It was therefore the 'word' from my small boy (a suggestion to have theatricals at Christmas time) that ignited my mind in the direction of theatricals, and this was accompanied by an immediate whirl of excitement. I can only compare my mental condition at that moment to a motor-car, when the ignition-switch is turned on, making the engine run at a great pace, producing great noise and causing the whole car to vibrate. All motorists know that these noises and vibrations are only modified when the engine is permitted to do its real work of propelling the vehicle.

I certainly did vibrate when the thought was suggested to my mind, that at last a heartfelt wish, so long suppressed, could be gratified; and I am equally certain that I made much noise. How quickly the brain works when the spark ignites the 'right mixture!' Almost whilst listening to my boy, three main questions were settled in my mind: (1) where the experiment was to be made; (2) when, and (3) what it was to be. Then the clutch was slipped in, and away we went on a pleasure trip, that had only, up to that moment, been a dream.

I had no doubts as to the locality in which the theatrical performances were to take place, viz., in a specially built theatre in my own grounds. The experiment must be no makeshift in a studio, and there must be no door left open for excuses, in case of failure. It must be the biggest thing we could do. We must stand or fall on the merits or demerits of the performances. There was no immodesty in this determination. It was on the line on which everything connected with my school was done, a determination to leave no stone unturned to secure success—success for our own satisfaction.

In the little garden facing the road there was a building, which, with many other odd erections, I had to purchase when I located myself in Bushey. I thought this would answer for the auditorium when the interior was redecorated. To this small building I proposed to add the stage. Being in the midst of the building of my house, I had all the available men at hand for the alterations and additions. The interior of the auditorium was panelled with pinewood, left natural; there was also some carving added. The small gallery was supported by a huge column, carved in wood after a design of a fifteenth-century column (also in wood), which I had seen and admired in the National Museum at Munich. Proper tip-up seats were added, and the whole auditorium seated one hundred and fifty persons.

It was autumn when the idea of theatricals took possession of me; but by the following summer we were ready for our guests, with a theatre, and a short play—

lasting one hour. Play is perhaps too serious a word for this 'fragment,' as I defined it in the programme. It was a plastic picture, of varying groups of figures, with an annotation (so to speak) both of song and of instrumental music. A student wrote of it:

> 'Tis a tale of a time that is past,
> 'Tis nought but a thought, you will say;
> It came with the midnight dark,
> And fades with the light of day.'

Within the fringe of a forest of mighty trees, leaving but a small opening to skyward, a ragged crew of gypsies lay asleep around a smouldering fire, the sky and moon contrasting in their silvery tone with the light of the fire. On this scene the curtain rose. It was, in all truth, a picture —stereoscopic in its reality. To those who sat in the front seats it was as real and as finished as it was to those who sat in the gallery; and the complete picture within the proscenium (which formed a frame) was seen satisfactorily by one and all in the auditorium alike.

The luminosity of the sky, which was not produced by paint, and the moon, with its soft, mysterious halo, were our triumphs. True to nature, the moon passed with almost imperceptible motion across the sky, until out of sight, when the sky became tinted with the colour of dawn. A rabble crew of gypsies, with queen and minstrel and warning hermit (to be scoffed at), with heathen worship of the stolen child; with song and dance, with incantations of the queen sorceress, and an exodus of the gypsies at the break of day, leaving the scene to peaceful shepherds—

that was all; it was only a picture of form and colour, of action and romance.

There was a *scenario* made for the change of grouping and pictorial action. As a picture composed of living figures it must not be confused with those unnatural *tableaux vivants* that might be done so much better with wax-work figures—which, at least, would not 'wobble.' In looking at such strained exhibitions, I have always felt a breathless anxiety lest one or other in the group should sneeze.

For this 'fragment' I borrowed lyrics from George Eliot's poem, *The Spanish Gypsy*, and one or two were specially written by a friend. I put these to music, and wrote some additional descriptive music for the pantomimic action. There was no merit in the music, and it was, without doubt, banal at times. But I had to make the plunge into the unknown world of musical composition, and the occasion at least answered that purpose. Fortunately the picture remains in the memory of our guests, and the music is forgotten.

No small credit, I think, was due to us in grouping so many persons on a stage of such small dimensions. We gave scale by the design, and emphasised it by mystery in the lighting. And such was the character of the posing of the groups, that we added at least eighteen inches to the height of the lady (Miss Griffiths, afterwards my wife) who took the part of the Sorceress. I remember introducing her, after the performance, to one of our most distinguished actors, who could hardly believe his eyes

when he looked at her. 'Good gracious,' were his words, 'is it possible that you are no taller than that? Why, I thought you were about seven feet high, and I wondered all the time where on earth so tall a woman could be found.' Many friends, whom I took on the stage, declared they wished I had not shown them the means by which the perfect illusion was produced. In this first experiment it was the illusion of that picturesque scene which constituted its sole recommendation. Therefore in the case of this 'Fragment' it may be best to leave the reader in the dark as to the methods employed for its realisation. I suggest this, not from any motives of keeping secrets; I have no secrets, and never did have, of anything connected with my experimental work, whether in etching and engraving, enamelling, painting, or stage-craft. When I come to my second essay, *An Idyl*, I shall have much to say on matters of stage-craft. It may just be worth mentioning that for the performance of *The Sorceress*, I drew on my students alone for the actors and actresses, with the exception of Miss Griffiths, my uncle, and myself.[1] The rehearsals were lessons in picture-making, and the students learnt the art of grouping figures artistically within a given

[1] I did, however, have two professional singers from town: one, a tenor, who from behind the scenes, sang my solo whilst I merely pretended to do so; and a soprano, who, also from behind the scenes, sang the Sorceress's Incantation.

On one occasion my tenor missed his train from Harrow; and although I knew I could not reach the high G in my solo, I thought I would take my chance of getting through by opening my mouth wide at that note, for the orchestra had the same note, and I hoped the audience would not notice my evasion of it. But just as I opened my mouth at the G, I heard the note resound in full force from behind me. The tenor had arrived just in time.

space, and of a fixed character. They saw the changes I made when one scheme failed, and another was tried. In all their wild enthusiasm, they lost no chance of gathering some information that might help them in their art. It was all an amplification of 'My School and My Gospel.'

CHAPTER XII

We had achieved a certain success, sufficiently marked to justify the ambition that sprang up in the hearts of us all, to do something bigger and more important the following year. And before the sounds of the shepherd's pipe had died away at the last performance of *The Sorceress*, I had a new play, roughly-hewn, in my mind.

This play was to be the antithesis of the wild medley just finished; it was to be an idyllic English play of the thirteenth century, with gentle theme and sunny landscape. 'Oh, but do bring in our moon again,' was the universal cry of the students. 'Very well,' I answered, 'and this time I will demonstrate the possibilities of that "Bushey luminary," by making it rise over the distant hills—a great, red, harvest moon—and gradually increase its light as it rises higher and higher in the darkening sky.' There was a further demand: 'We must have a dance also.' 'That, too,' I said, 'you shall have.' But we felt our stage to be inadequate for a larger venture; we could not, on that existing stage, do justice to a more important play, such as was in contemplation. I immediately started the alteration, and enlarged the stage to dimensions of about forty feet deep, thirty feet wide, and sixty feet high. The auditorium was not altered, as an enlargement of that would have brought some seats into positions from which the spectator could see more than was desirable.

The *scenario* was soon evolved, and I was fortunate enough to get Mr. Joseph Bennett to write me the lyrics. Enough, for the story, that John the Smith had a daughter, Edith, who had been promised to one of his workmen, Dick-o'-the-Dale, in marriage. Some element of trouble had to be introduced, and the lord of the Hall, Fitz-Hugh, a gay, thoughtless young spark, who sees and admires the girl, and turns her head for a time with his flatteries, answered the purpose. The girl is everything to the widower, her father; and when he hears (rudely blurted out by the apprentice and the service-maid at meal-time) of what has been going on behind his back, the stern, strong man is terribly shaken. But how to admonish the daughter he so much loves? He resorts to the singing of an old ballad, which treats of a similar story but with a sad ending. Promises and forgiveness follow, and happiness and trust again enter the father's heart. Faithfully the girl tries to keep her promise to her father to spurn the rich lover. Left alone, she opens the casement, and the rays of the moon fill the room. She repeats dreamily the last two stanzas of the ballad.

Suddenly, the evil serenade of Fitz-Hugh is heard under the casement, soon to be followed by his entrance, and an attempt to carry away the struggling Edith. Of course, Dick comes in, and between the two a long scene ensues, not of physical strife, but of a strong moral appeal on the part of the workman to Fitz-Hugh's better self. Dick, however, when alone, goes through tortures of doubt and anxiety, not knowing how it stood with Edith's love for

him. But she has witnessed and heard all, and slowly creeps round to Dick, who, leaning forward on the table, has buried his face in his arms. At the girl's touch he springs up, and seeing at a glance the meaning of her mute appeal for forgiveness, he takes her passionately into his arms. That ends the second act, and all the trouble that it was thought necessary to introduce into the simple story ends with it. Only a joyous, short, third act was required. The same street is again seen as in the first act, but under a totally different effect of light. It is now bathed in the brilliant sunshine of an August morning—a day when the air dances with heat. The curtain rises on the empty street; not a soul is about. Soon two mummers enter and rest at the foot of the stone cross; they dust themselves, tune up their instruments (making hideous discord), and then proceed to sing their ballad, in grotesque manner. Finding no head appearing at any of the windows, and no occupants of the houses about, they wonder if the village is deserted, and stop in the middle of a cadence. A passing boy tells them that every soul of the place is in the church, at Edith's wedding. The church-organ is heard in the distance, then the wild ringing of chimes heralds the entry of the bridal procession. The street is filled with the gaily-dressed inhabitants; choruses follow, first sung by the children, as they strew the path of the happy pair with flowers; then the men sing to the bride, and the women to the bridegroom. A combined chorus ends the play with a 'Hurrah.'

CHAPTER XIII

I HAVE mentioned the figure painter's landscape as having some characteristics of its own. I wish I could find a parallel in painter's music, I mean music composed by a painter, and not merely music that is picturesque or descriptive.

Taken as a whole, painters certainly have a musical sense; and I think more musicians have been lost in the ranks of painters than painters in the ranks of musicians. It can also be stated that there are more painters who can play some musical instrument than musicians who can paint or draw. Mendelssohn's childish pencil drawings cannot be taken into account. I know of one musician who is a good sketcher, with a fine sense of colour and effect; but my list of musician-painters begins and ends with him. Our ranks have produced many actors and writers—the latter largely from those engaged in sculpture. Michael Angelo's sonnets have become classics, and I am not sure he did not touch music. I must also not leave out the architects, for one of our most prominent novel-writers originally practised as an architect.

A comparison between the practice of painting and that of music is an interesting subject to follow up. But it is not easy to find a solution for the facts I have stated regarding certain differences between the workers. It may

be said that I am trying to prove that the painter has a wider range of sympathies than the musician. As a matter of fact, I am not trying to prove anything.

To put it concisely, the basis of the graphic arts is nature; of music, it is thought, emotion. No great painter has sprung into a producer without training and practice. Yet some of the greatest and most beautiful tunes have originated from the people, one of whom has given voice, in music, to the national emotion, without training of any kind. We are satisfied to call such tunes, 'national airs.' We say of proverbs that they are 'the wit of one, and the wisdom of many'; we may also say of national airs, that they are the emotions of the many, concreted into musical form by the one who remains nameless. But the nameless one has been the instrument upon which the whole nation has played.

Music is the most natural expression of human emotions. Man, when jubilant, or overcome by thankfulness, must sing. In itself, music is the purest of all the arts. A tune cannot be immoral; it is made to appear so by its being attached to immoral words. Alone, a tune can be vulgar, common, or banal, but never immoral, or, I may add, blasphemous.

Unlike the painter, the musician needs neither nature nor a well-lighted studio in which to do his work. In a garret, with a candle, a table, pen and ink and ruled paper, he can produce an immortal composition. He need not move from his garret until his entire orchestral score is completed. He *sees* sound; he has heard it all. What

could a painter or a sculptor produce under such conditions? Nothing, perhaps, but designs for subjects.

There is, however, a close relationship between the two arts, otherwise we could not account for the interchange of terms. A painter calls his picture a symphony, and speaks of 'a note' in his work; a musician calls his composition a tone-picture. The latter uses several other terms belonging essentially to the graphic and plastic arts, such as 'out of one cast' (*aus einem Guss*), light and shade, and colour. But unlike the painter, the musician does not seem to require any change of occupation. Music is his breath; his brain is saturated with living notes, and all his resources are within himself. Perhaps if music were not such an all-absorbing art, musicians might have toyed as much with the graphic arts as painters have with music. The painter is, of necessity, more in touch with the external world, which naturally leads him to introduce some variations into the occupations of his life; and when he has a musical sense, it does not seem to me surprising if he tries his hand at musical composition. Many a painter has tunes running in his head, demonstrated by his whistling, often unconsciously, original tunes as he works. I have heard from such whistling painters many themes that were capable of musical development. The painters may not be able to write them down, or they are too lazy, or indifferent, to acquire the necessary musical technique which a child of intelligence, with a musical ear, could easily acquire. I know of a popular song-writer who never wrote a note. Having the gift of melody-invention, he sang the tune he had composed in his head to certain

lines of poetry, and this tune was taken down on paper by a musician, who further added the accompaniment. But for one who poses as a composer of songs, this method seems to be of questionable honesty.

There are painters, past and present, who have given much time to the practice of music. It is on record that Gainsborough worked so earnestly and enthusiastically at it, that 'music seemed sometimes to be the business of his life.' A colleague of mine (a landscapist) always carries a sketch-book of ruled music-lines, in which he jots down airs, madrigals, glees, hymns, etc., that occur to him whilst painting.

There is one rather notable difference between the two arts, music and painting, which touches the student. The musical student, whilst studying music, acquires a great part of his education by hearing music, whereas the art student's visits to picture galleries play a secondary part in the earliest stages of his education. No picture can be said to be a definite effect of the entire technique employed in its production; it is only the last, and not the innumerable earlier touches, that are visible. A picture is far more of a mystery to the young painter—indeed to a painter of any age—than a musical composition is to the young musician. Musical sounds are definite, and so are musical forms, harmonies, resolutions, and so on. There is no parallel to this in the art of painting.

Perhaps the very mention of the name, Pianola, may shock some readers, who despise all devices of that kind. But they have not seen the educational advantages attached

to this invention. In the last few years, during which I possessed a pianola, I have gained a greater knowledge of the great masters' works than in my whole life put together, and I was a pretty regular concert-goer. Being but an indifferent pianist, the world of music was more or less out of my reach, and I had to rely upon the eye alone, which was not sufficient. But the pianola has helped me to study the masters' methods of workmanship, and to grasp the characteristics of each composer. I should have been far more advanced in musical knowledge if such an instrument (for it is that) had been obtainable in the days when I wrote *An Idyl*, as I could then have heard the effect of my music before the orchestral performance. However interesting a musical composition may look on paper, it is a dead letter until made audible.

To the composer, the pianola offers manifold advantages. It may not infrequently happen that he is not a virtuoso on the piano, but with this device he can render the most difficult passages in any tempo; indeed, he can accurately test appropriate tempi.

Situated as I am here, it was but a simple matter for us to make a little machine for puncturing the rolls; and after pencilling the slits, it was a pleasant occupation for my wife to cut them. This arrangement was, of course, only for the making of one roll.

In writing for the pianola, no thought need be given to the 'playability' of any passage on the piano; the limitations of the ten fingers vanish. I shall never forget the effect on me when, after writing a passage of innumerable

notes to be rapidly played (which, of course, took time to write), I put it, punctured, on to the pianola, and played it off full speed! It seemed like a bit of magic. By such means, a very fair effect of complicated orchestral treatment can be given—surely a boon to composers.

For safety's sake, let me add that I hold no brief for the Pianola Company.

CHAPTER XIV

Of all forms of music, the orchestral always appealed most strongly to me; I felt it to be the full palette of colours. Whilst studying at the South Kensington Schools in the summers of 1866 and 1867, I could only allow myself half-a-crown a week for pleasure, and that was spent in the regular attendance at the Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts. It was there that I learnt the character of the orchestra. I followed with eager ears the peculiarity of string, wood-wind, and brass; and I noted with keen interest the singularly penetrating effect of the harp. These concerts constituted my musical education, and I can fully endorse the words of a writer in the *Daily Graphic*, who, in an obituary notice of Sir August Manns, said: 'The Saturday concerts at the Crystal Palace were to many of us a kind of religion in themselves. We approached the Palace almost as if it were the temple of some thrice-hallowed rite, and surely never was high priest more venerated than the fiery little conductor whose baton opened to us the marvellous secrets of the wonder-world of art.'

During the years in which I suppressed my music, I never allowed the lessons learnt at these concerts to fade. Mentally I was always putting tunes, that occurred to me, into imaginary instrumentation. When, however, I wrote

the music (such as it was) to the first experiment, I had not yet acquired the technicalities necessary for writing orchestration, and merely noted the character of the instrumentation in a piano score. A musician, employed by the conductor, afterwards orchestrated it.

But this procedure would not do for the more ambitious attempt, *An Idyl*, and a burning shame came over me when I thought of my deficiency in the knowledge of instrumental writing. Well, there was nothing for it but to set my teeth and master the details of the art.

This was no small matter under the circumstances. There was no time to have lessons; besides, writing exercises (and that for weeks and months) in my case might, as I thought, deaden the inventive faculty in me, which, at the time, was pouring out tune after tune (with no apparent effort) for the already fixed *scenario* of the new play. There was only one course open to me—to learn the technicalities of instrumentation from books and scores. I bought every available work on the subject, and I further purchased the full orchestral scores of Cherubini's 'Wasserträger' and Wagner's 'Meistersinger.' The latter never left me, day or night, and I can say I literally slept with it. The transposed instruments gave me a good deal of trouble; I did not find it easy to fix them in my memory; but when that ingenious publication, called *Lafleur's Atlas of Instrumentation*, came into my hands, my troubles in this direction were over. On that long chart I could see at a glance, compass, transposed notes, and relative positions of every instrument used in the orchestra. I know the

musician, who may glance at these pages, will shake his head deprecatingly, and call this a very perfunctory method of education. But I had no time for education, properly speaking; I had to *do* the thing at all hazards. With some misgivings I asked a musician to look at the finished score, and make corrections. But his corrections in no way satisfied me; so, when his back was turned, I rubbed out all but those that I could myself recognise as improvements.

A very important matter had now to be settled—the conductor! My friend, Mr. Josef Ludwig, kindly consented to be leader; but the conductor was still a distressing uncertainty. When I spoke of this at the family meal, my eldest daughter, who was then a girl of about thirteen, said, 'Why don't you have Richter?' 'Good heavens, child,' I answered, 'what are you talking about?' It seemed too outrageous a suggestion to those who understood what it meant. But she crowned her remark by another—an even more unexpected one: 'Well, isn't he good enough?' The 'word,' however, as on other occasions, set the idea going in my mind, and, after much hesitation, I took the bold step of sending the orchestral score of the three acts to Dr. Richter, who was then in Vienna. Those were anxious days, awaiting his answer; and I was quite prepared for a letter advising me to 'stick to my last.' But when the longed-for letter came, it was full of warm-hearted appreciation and praise of my effort. My excitement (fully shared by the students) can be imagined when I read that he consented to conduct my *Idyl* in Bushey. As I have already mentioned, Dr. Richter

PERFORMED AT

THE

HERKOMER THEATRE, BUSHEY,

June, 1889.

Dramatis Personæ.

	John, the Smith . . .	Professor HERKOMER.
The Smith's Workmen	Dick-o'-the-Dale (*in love with Edith*) .	Mr. DANIEL A. WEHRSCHMIDT.
	Hal	Mr. LOCKHART BOGLE.
	Jack, the Apprentice . . .	Mr. D. J. WILLIAMS.
	Fitz-Hugh, the Lord of the Hall .	Mr. HOWDEN TINGEY. *(First appearance).*
	First Mummer . .	Mr. EMIL WEHRSCHMIDT.
	Second Mummer . .	Mr. D. J. WILLIAMS.
	Edith, the Smith's Daughter . .	Miss DOROTHY DENE.
	Meg, Servant-Maid in John's house .	Miss FLORENCE WILTON *(Of the Carl Rosa Light Opera Company).*

Old People, Children, Reapers, Associates of Fitz-Hugh, etc., by the Herkomer Students.

Conductor of Orchestra . .	Dr. HANS RICHTER.
Leader of Orchestra	Herr JOSEPH LUDWIG.

Scenery *by* Prof. HERKOMER & Assistants. Dresses *by* Prof. & Mrs. HERKOMER.

conducted all the performances, thirteen in number, and several orchestral rehearsals. He was heart and soul in the whole scheme; he even took lodgings in the village, and went to London for his concerts.

This was the period of my life when the work I imposed upon myself was so excessive that even greed could ask for no more. I worked at my portraits and subject-pictures, and I did etching as usual, considering these to be my first duty. But to this all-sufficient labour must be added the designing of details for my house, which was in course of erection; the preparation of lectures for Oxford, where I held the Slade Professorship; the uninterrupted attendance at my school; the building-up of a stage-picture for the play; the writing of the music for the same; the irritating work of correcting the copied parts for the orchestra; and, finally, the most severe strain of all on the nerves—the rehearsing of a new play. I leave it to the reader to judge if this was a normal state of things. Yet, during these months of excitement I was in good health, and retired to bed long after midnight without any feeling of fatigue. I had no assistance from stimulants, as I was a water-drinker and a non-smoker. But it was the result of the domination of mind over body for the time being—a condition, however, that could not last. Nor did it; for I have since paid a heavy price for that pleasure-period in long years of bad health.

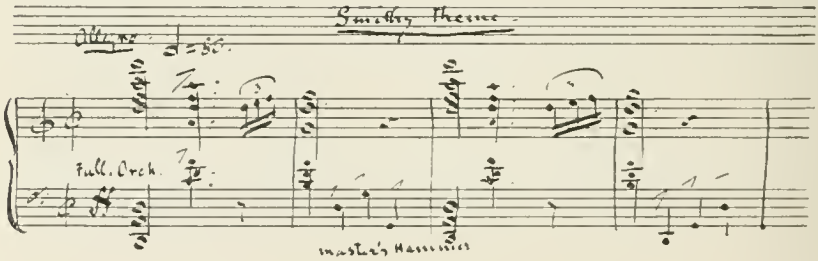
There is a little episode in connection with the rehearsals that may be mentioned here. It was necessary to rehearse the strings at least before Dr. Richter came. I therefore

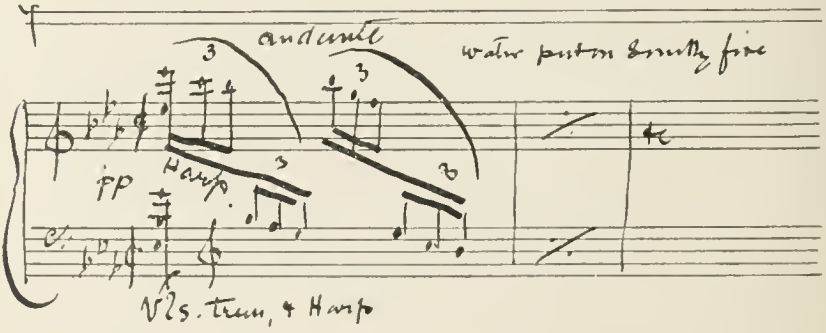
engaged the players who belonged to his band and were to play in the performances; I also engaged a musician to play the wood-wind and horn parts on the piano. When they were ready to begin, there was no conductor, and there was a unanimous call for me to conduct them. Alas, I had never attempted to wield a baton in my life. I had watched conductors, certainly, but that was of little avail when suddenly called upon to do the actual directing of the players. How I puzzled those good musicians! And no wonder, as the irresistible desire to *listen* was ever making me forget my new position. Further than that, I did not know how to give some of the important signs. Clearly, some teaching was indispensable, and through the kindness of Mr. Josef Ludwig, who gave me a couple of lessons in this art, I was able, at the second rehearsal of the strings, to give the beat properly. His lessons were most practical. With our lady-pianist (who assisted us in all the preliminary rehearsals) at the piano, and Mr. Ludwig playing first violin, I was told by him how to conduct them. Whenever I made a blunder he stopped me, and told me what I should have done. He made me go over those parts a good many times, until, indeed, he felt I was 'safe.' When Richter came, everything was in readiness, for we were well ahead of time. The stage-picture was complete, to the smallest detail; the six men who worked the lights and the changing of scenes were well drilled; and all the separate characters, the solos, choruses, and *mise-en-scène*, had been thoroughly and exhaustively rehearsed. I may say that *An Idyl* was rehearsed, from first to last, for six months.

The performances took place on the afternoons of three days in the week. It was a beautiful summer, and fine weather never deserted us. A special train was arranged for the guests, and carriages engaged to bring them to the theatre from the station. The whole village was *en fête*, the inhabitants eagerly scanning faces to 'spot' celebrities. Soon the auditorium began to hum with conversation, and the instruments to tune up. Behind the proscenium costumed figures began to fill the stage, and there was considerable peeping at the audience through the small holes in the curtain. As stage manager, I took a last survey to see that everything was complete, when Dr. Richter received the sign to begin the prelude. Then the curtain rose, and revealed a living picture, of which we had some right to be proud.

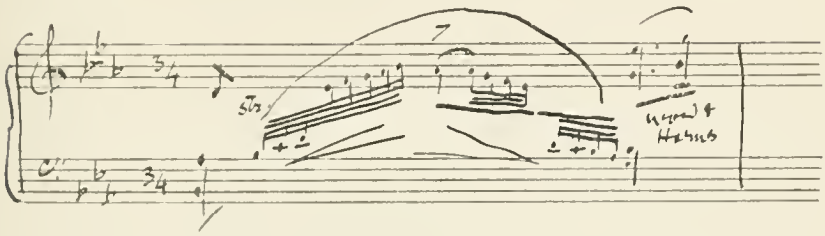
CHAPTER XV

I WOULD like to clear the way to the consideration of scenic art by finishing the musical side of the *Idyl.* The principal themes will, therefore, be given in this chapter, accompanied by a brief re-description of the action of the play.

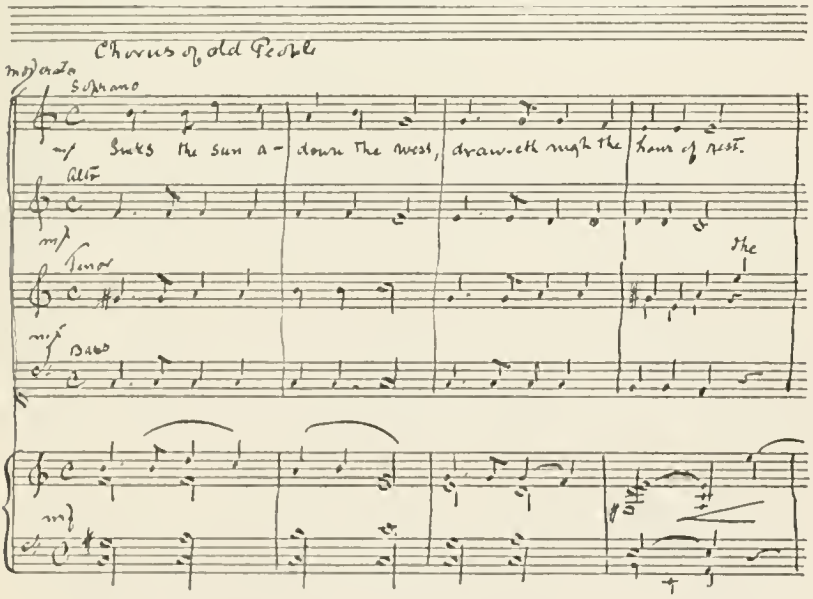
After a short prelude (anticipating the smithy-music), the curtain rises on the street scene, revealing the smiths at work. Effect, evening.

Work at the forge having ceased, water is sprinkled on the fire, to damp it down.



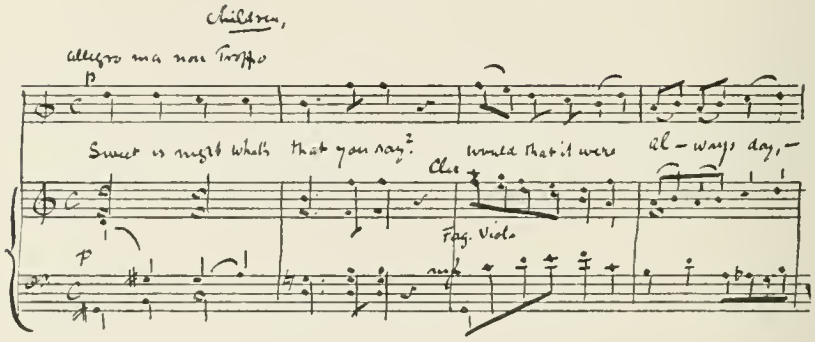
Dick takes up a piece of iron ornamentation which is in progress of making, and applies himself to it with the file.



The old people, sitting on the benches attached to the houses opposite the smithy, now sing their even-song. I was confronted with a problem in this chorus: how to get sufficient volume of sound with so few singers, who were to remain seated as I grouped them. I got over the difficulty by placing an unseen chorus of singers behind the scenes. The effect of sound was quite homogeneous, and nobody suspected the trick. An electric indicator worked by Richter in the distant orchestra gave them the beat.

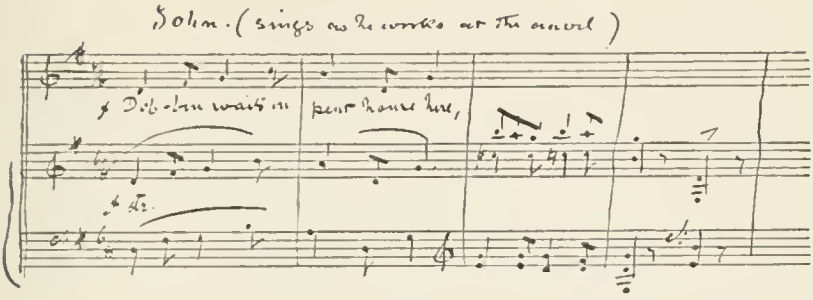


Between the two verses of the even-song, the children, who have been playing in the street, have their say.



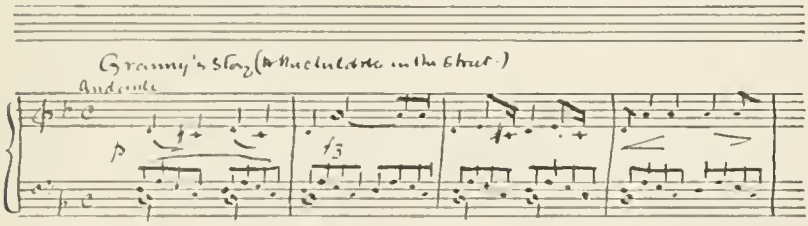
I had boys who were musically trained to take the part of these children, and a nuisance they were: they needed a strong hand to keep them in order. During the second act, in which they had nothing to do, they played about in the garden, and filled their pockets with frogs from my pond. These frogs would find their way out, and drop on to the stage in the third act, getting between the feet of the people in the wedding procession.

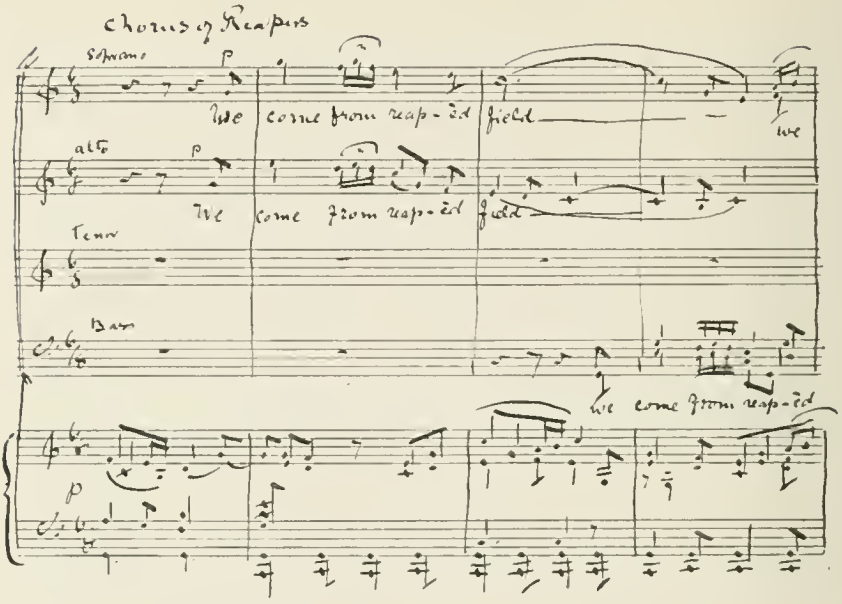
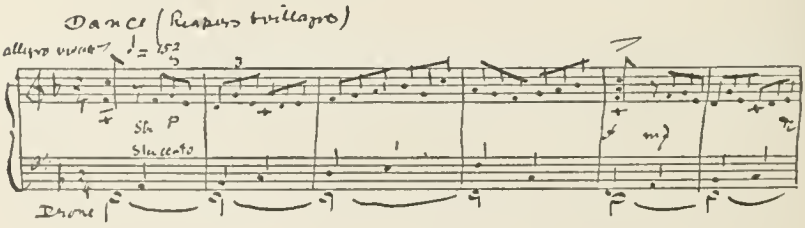
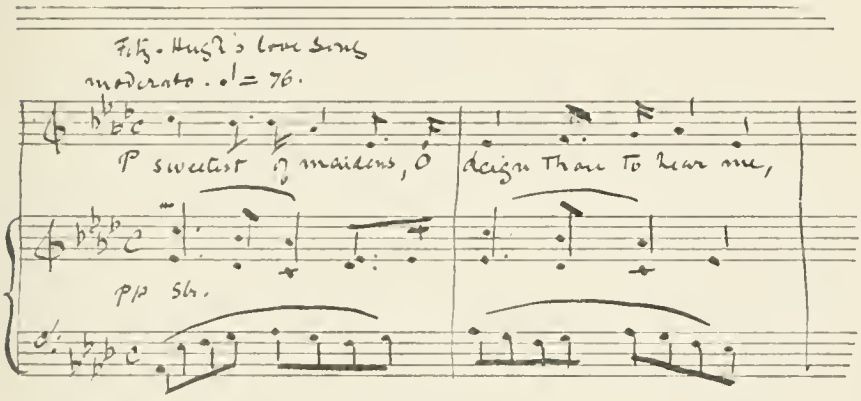
After the even-song is finished, John the Smith re-enters and continues to work on the same piece of ornamentation that Dick had been filing, singing the while a rollicking song.



The day's work being now over, the Angelus is heard, and all drop on their knees, John drawing to him his neighbours' little girl, and joining her tiny hands together for prayer.

After this, the street assumes its former aspect of life and movement. The children, seeing an old granny enter, surround her, and beg for a story: this is given in pantomimic action, to the music.

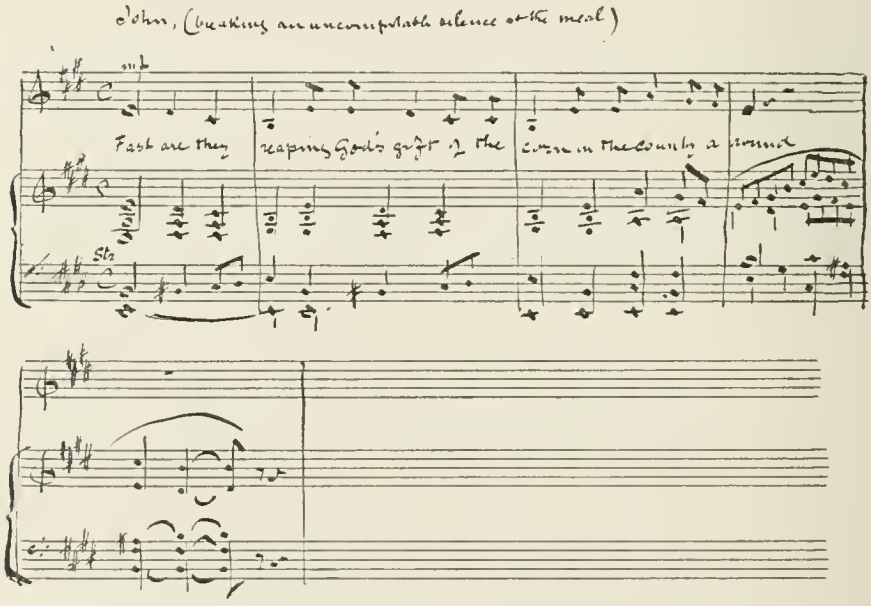


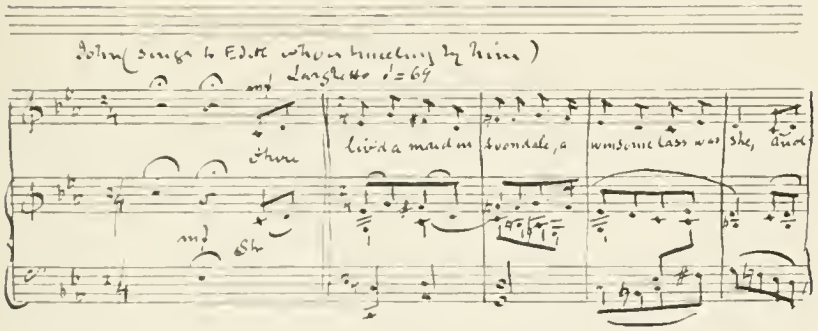
The reapers now enter, the women carrying corn-sheaves on their heads.

Then comes the dance. I adopted a rhythm I found, dating back to the fifteenth century in England. It had four times nine bars, and we were strangely balked in the dance when that ninth bar came. We had, indeed, to invent some separate action for that bar alone, but it gave character to our dance. I may just mention that I did not copy the old tune, but only adopted the rhythm.

The stage gradually clears of all the characters except Edith, who lingers dreamily on. Fitz-Hugh enters, and sings his love-song.

Edith yields to his embrace, when her father's voice is heard from within, calling her name. She suddenly breaks away, and hurriedly enters the house. There is a very long pause. Fitz-Hugh then shrugs his shoulders, and jauntily moves up the street singing his serenade. When he has gone, the father, John, once more appears, and watches the lord's retreating figure, evidently moved by some strong emotion, indicated by his action.

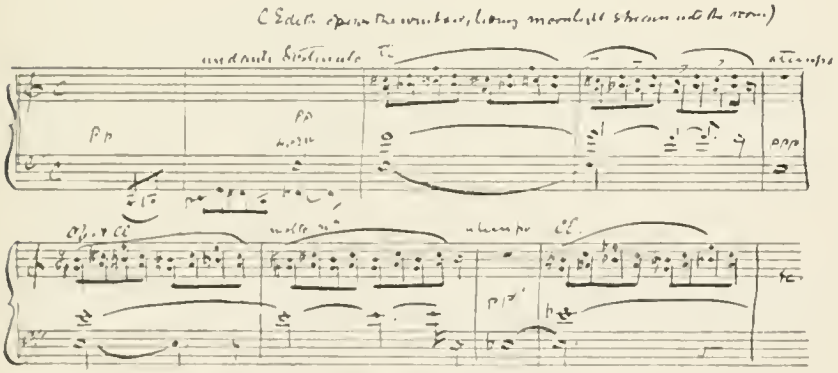
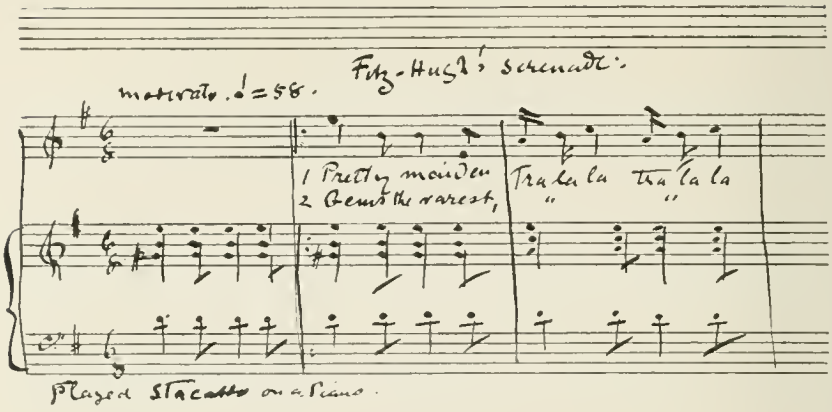
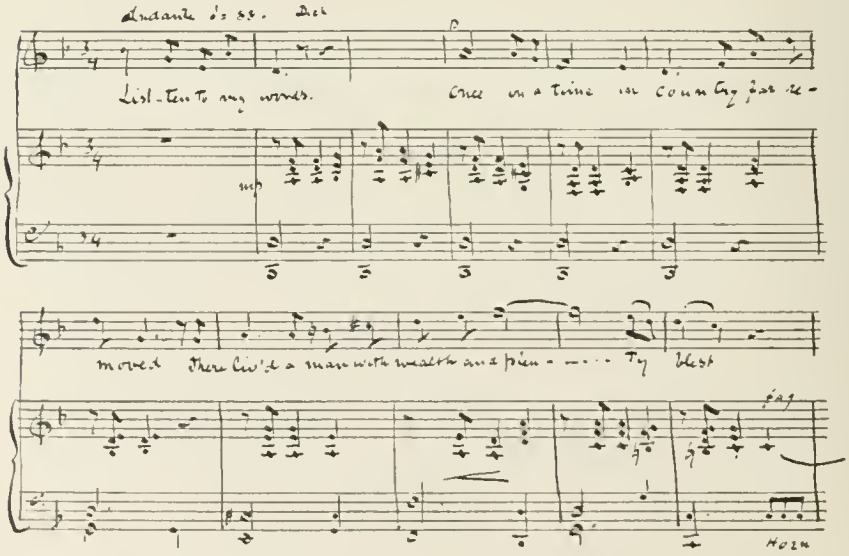
END OF FIRST ACT.

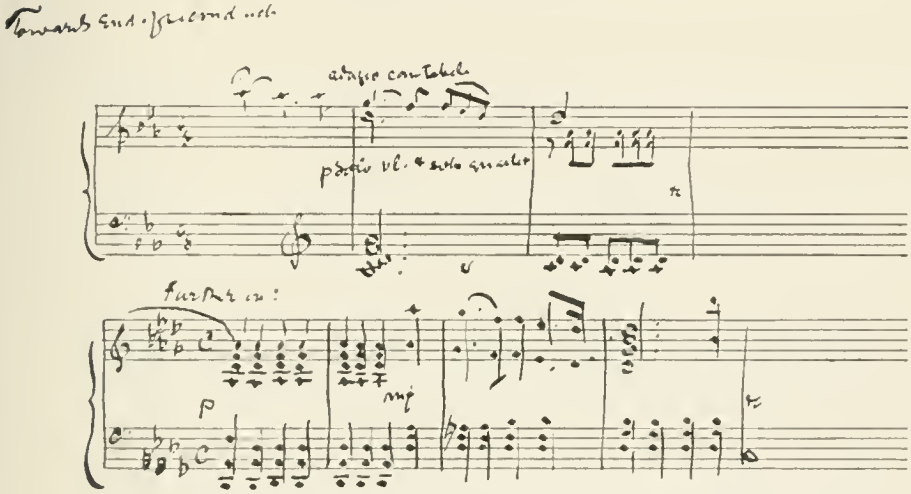
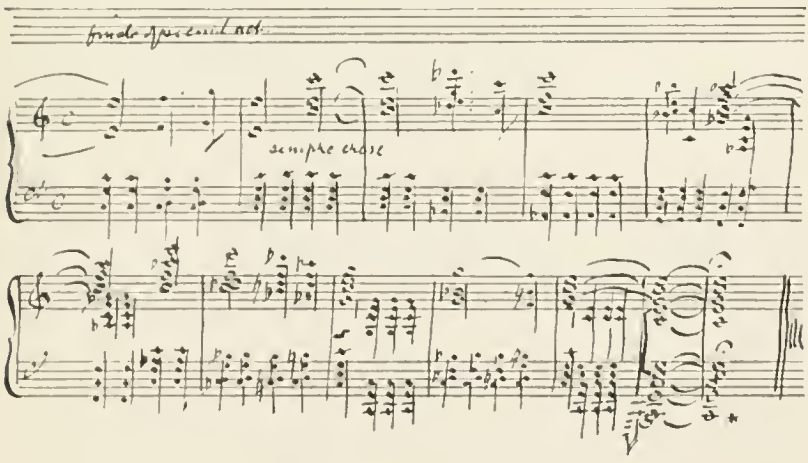
SECOND ACT

Interior of John the Smith's house: Jack and Meg discovered laying supper. They tease each other, then quarrel, and finally 'make it up' and dance,—in the middle

of which John enters, with evident trouble on his brow. Edith and the workmen enter, and after grace, all settle down to the meal. There is some strongly felt tension amongst them. The uncomfortable silence is broken by the father, who starts a conversation at the table.

The meal finished, all leave but John and Edith. The father, seating himself, calls Edith to his side. He sings her a ballad, giving the story of an unfortunate maid who listened to a rich lover.

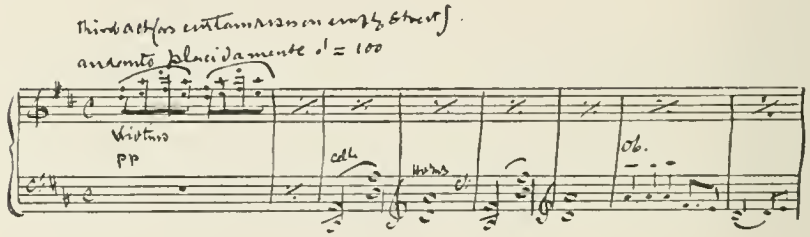


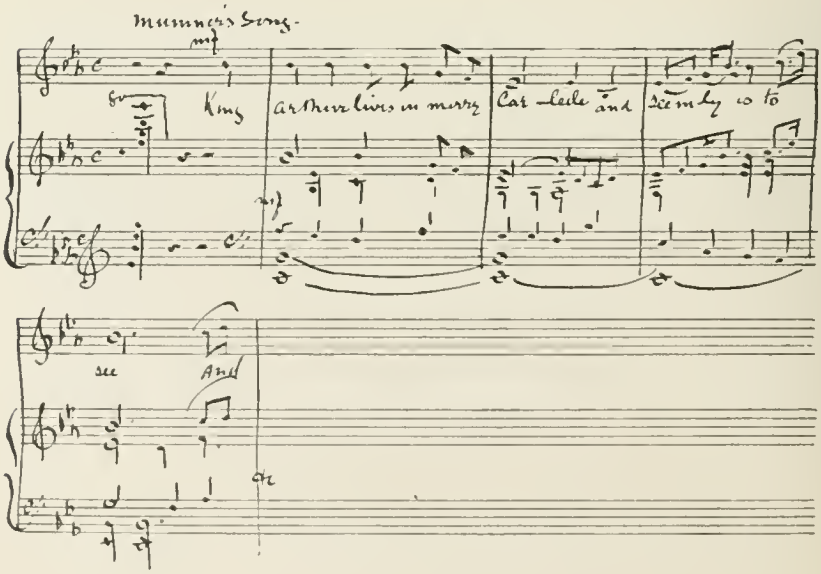
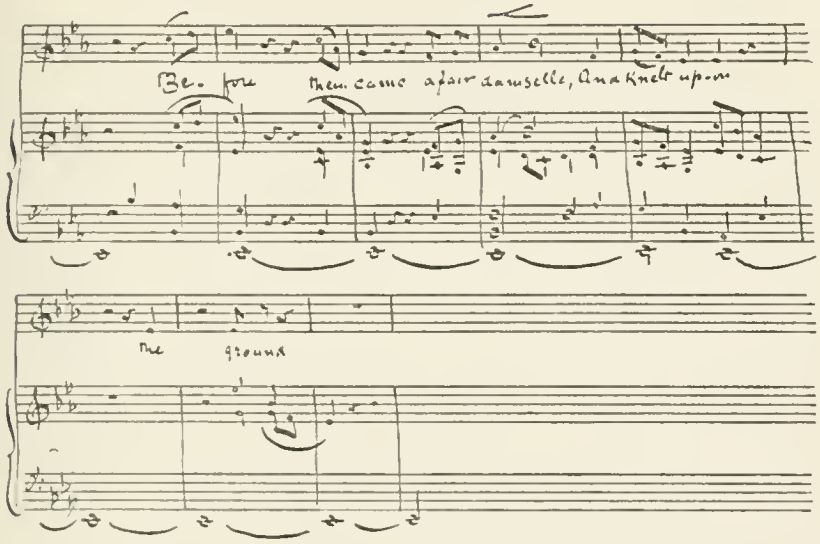
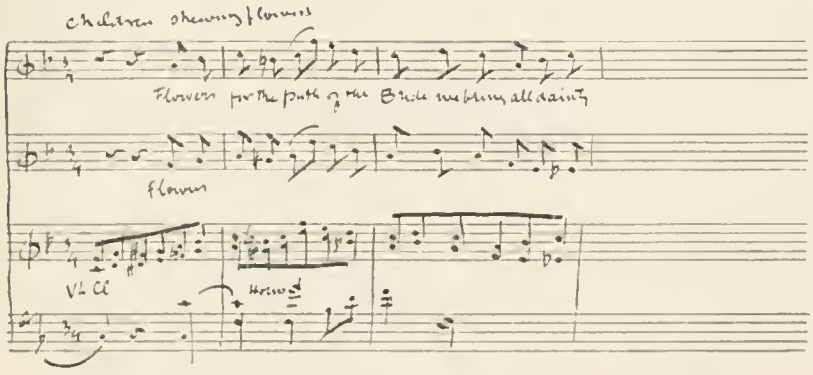
Edith, left alone, is torn between duty and the new fascination. She opens the window, letting the moonlight stream into the room.

She sings snatches of the ballad, when suddenly Fitz-Hugh's serenade is heard:

Fitz-Hugh enters, and tries to carry off Edith, when Dick intervenes. A long scene between the two men ensues, during which Dick appeals to the lord's better self:

Andante ♩= 88. Dick
Listen to my words.
Once on a time in country far re-
mp
moved there lived a man with wealth and plen- - - - ty blest
Horn

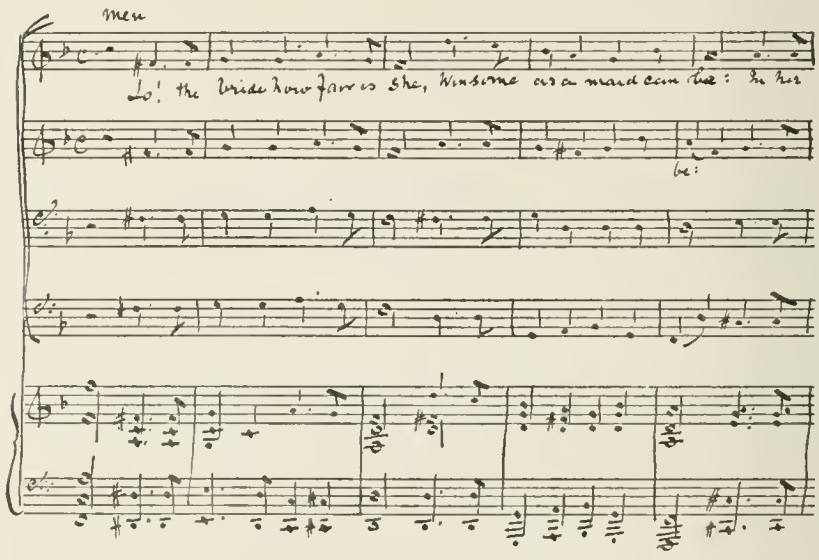
Fitz-Hugh leaves, evidently much moved. Dick sinks into a chair by the table, and buries his face in his hands.

Edith comes hesitatingly forward. She touches Dick, who is unaware of her presence. She stretches out her hands imploringly to him, and he takes her passionately into his arms.

END OF SECOND ACT.

THIRD ACT

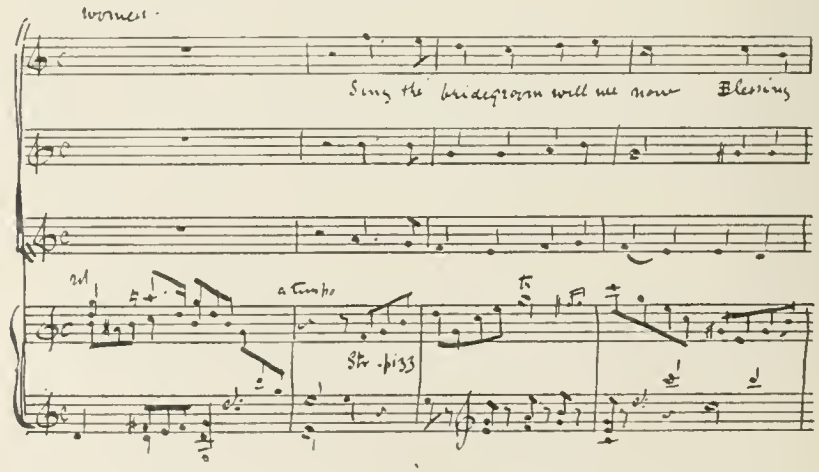
The village street scene again, but bathed in brilliant sunshine. Empty stage at first.

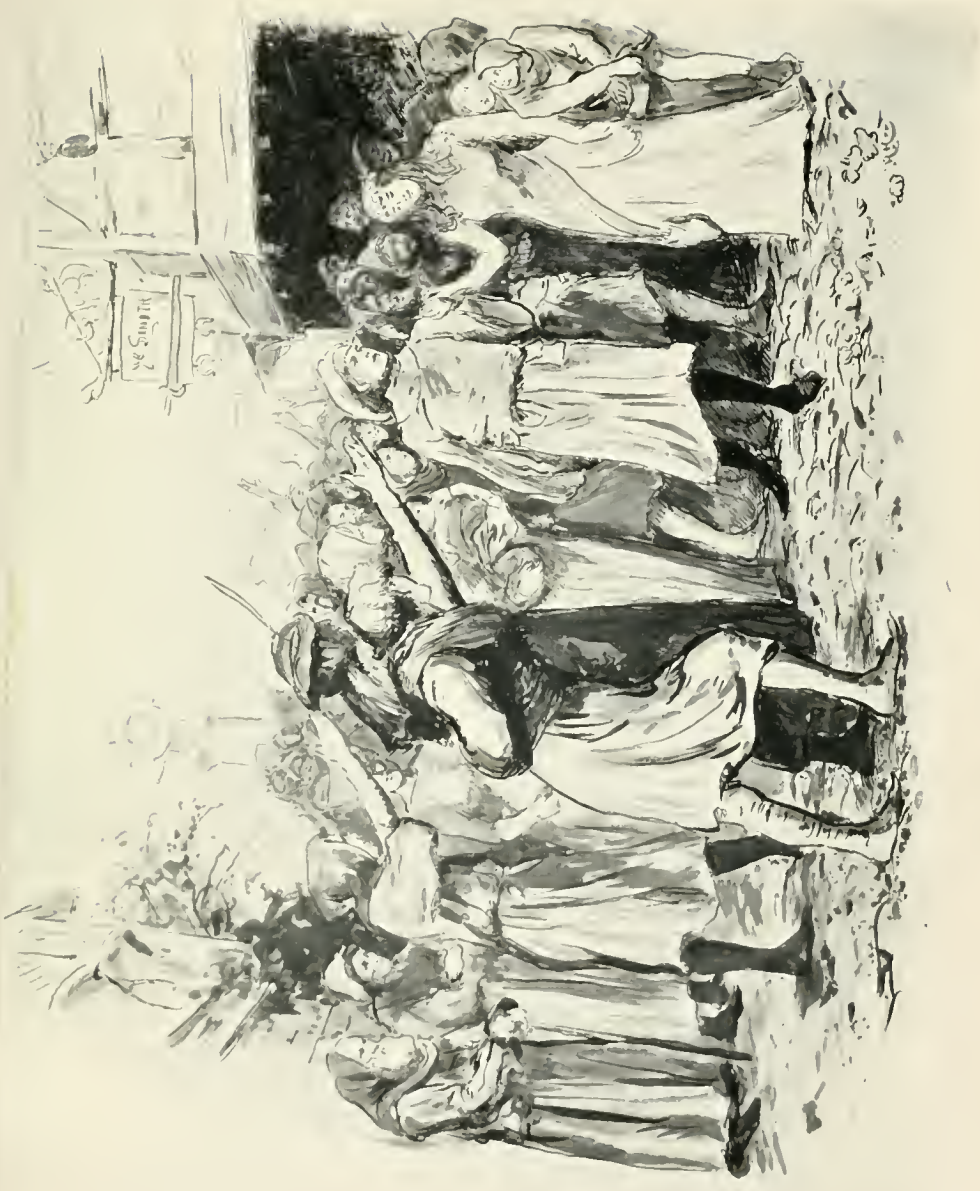


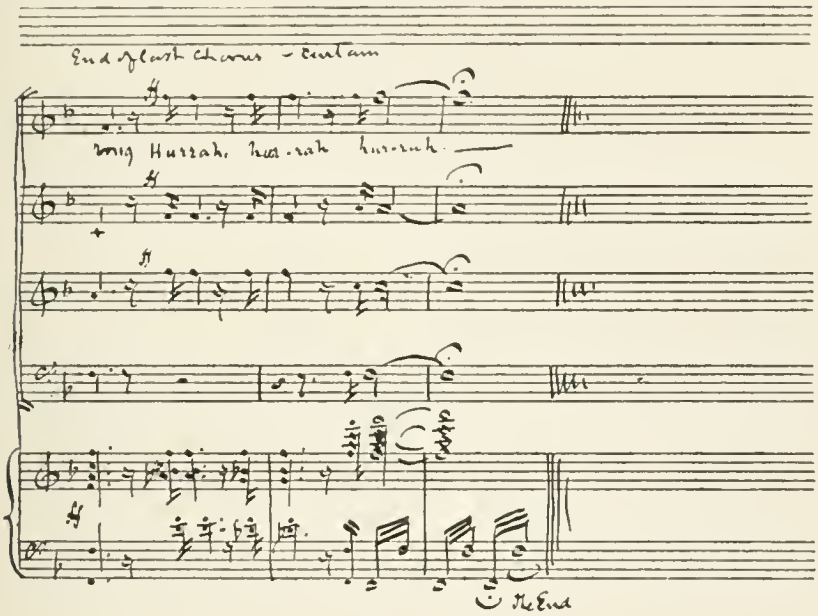
Mummers enter, and presently between them sing their ballad, each taking alternate verses.

Thinking the place deserted, the one who is singing suddenly breaks off.

Enter children, who precede the bride and bridegroom, strewing flowers in their path. The crowd follows.

The men then sing to the bride:



and the women to the bridegroom:





There is then a combined chorus, of which I give the concluding bars, which end the play :

MY SCHOOL AND MY GOSPEL

CHAPTER XVI

Some introductory remarks on scenic art generally, I think, are necessary before I describe the methods used in my experiments, in order to place myself in the right position as a worker in stage-craft.

Unfortunately, the moment an independent worker succeeds in his undertaking by methods which are off the beaten track, he is at once accredited with ulterior motives for so doing. A certain section of the public, I have noticed, make a business of giving premature news and information. Inquiries would be fatal to their trade, hence they make none, with the result that the true (or partially true) and directly untrue, get a little mixed.

Although the position I took up when I started my theatricals in Bushey was a perfectly straightforward one, these good people of 'The Imaginative News Company (Unlimited)' would have it that my intention was to reform stage-craft. If an attempt were made to arrest such a declaration, it would be found impossible to get at the original source from which it emanated, as the aforesaid Company does its work on slippery lines. It would be like trying to catch a snake. I have even lately been a victim to a further false report, viz., that I have left Bushey. When I resigned my directorship of the Herkomer School, there were most kind references made in the newspapers

regarding my work as a teacher, but not one suggested that I had, in consequence, left the place. Yet I am daily assailed with the phrase: 'Oh! I hear you have left Bushey.' It was so with my scenic work, and nothing could remove the belief that I had placed myself in the position of reformer.

The very idea of my posing as a reformer of stage-craft would have been an act of impudence and absurdity. If such had been my intention, I would have produced something on a London, and not on my own private, stage, which was given up to the preparation of one piece for twelve months. Many devices, feasible in the latter case, could not have been adopted in connection with a stage where arrangements had to be made for a dozen changes within that length of time. Again, the important question of the probable 'run of a play' never came within the pale of my calculations. I had fixed the number of performances, and there was to be no restriction in the cost of production. It was to be money spent, deliberately, for a pleasure, and not as an investment, for no tickets were sold except for the charity performances we gave. Under these circumstances, surely I had a right to enjoy myself in my own way. I have said that we started with a clean slate, knowing nothing of stage methods as practised in the regular theatre. But this assertion needs a little qualification, inasmuch as I had carefully watched scenic work for years, but invariably only from the auditorium. Still, that, after all said and done, is the place from which the stage-picture should look right. It matters not how it is done,

so long as the spectator, from where he sits, gets the impression of a complete illusion.

As an artist, it was impossible for me not to see certain defects in professional scenic work. These I put down, not to want of talent, but to haste, cost, and tradition. Original innovations are costly, as they need much time for experiment. But there is no time given to the scenic artist; pieces must be put on the stage quickly, as the enormous rent of the theatre is, meanwhile, eating into monetary resources. Again, neither playwright nor stage-manager can predict whether a piece will 'take on,' hence the hesitation on the part of the management to risk a costly production. Traditional methods then come to the rescue, and the art is left at a standstill.

During the last eighteen years I have seen great changes in stage-craft, and great strides have been made. But before that, there is little to record of drastic changes beyond the substitution of electric light for gas. But the former, as it was then applied, did not advance the art; its possibilities (principally in the matter of greater safety) were not touched. It only brought into greater prominence the already besetting sin of over-lighting the stage, which has only too often given a garishness not pleasant to the artistic eye. It has also retarded the development in scenic art of mystery, the first, and unrivalled, prerogative of stage-craft.

Light is the most potent factor in scenic art. By its magic, the most trumpery materials are transformed into priceless fabrics; tinsel into gold and silver; and a few feet

of canvas into vast distances. It is proper lighting, rather than good painting, upon which the success of a scene depends. Richard Wagner still held the erroneous idea that scenic success lay in the painting, and always endeavoured to employ the best artists. But the best painter will fail in stage work if he does not possess the many other qualities required for that difficult art. Actuality on the stage is useless if the stage is over-lighted. Real objects can be made to look like painted cardboard by such lighting. I saw a striking instance of this in a performance in Germany of *Tristan und Isolde* in which a certain chair appeared to me to have its ornamentation painted on thin boards. But I was assured that it was a real chair, and that all the detail on it was carved.

Whilst on the question of light, I should like to say a word on that unaccountable luminary, the stage moon. That, I think, has shown stage-craft at its worst. I have seen that moon rise rapidly and perpendicularly to a certain point (a hole in the canvas), where it remained stationary for the rest of the act. It shed its light, moreover, from the opposite direction, from the limelight behind the proscenium, as the actor's face had to be made visible, no matter what the situation. I have seen two actors on the stage at the same time, in a moonlight scene, and noted that a ray of the moon followed each as he moved about the stage. On that occasion the auditorium and stage were filled with a London fog that clearly located the direction from which the two solid rays of light emanated, viz., from opposite sides of the proscenium! The public will

roar with laughter if a comedian pretends to stumble in his entry, but it has not learned to see the humour of such 'moon jokes.' The origin of the word 'theatrical' as a word of opprobrium (when used in a criticism of the fine arts) is to be found in such stage anomalies.

Although stage tradition had benumbed the artistic senses, I would not do away with such tradition in any of the arts. But it must be merely a foundation, and not stop the way to further development. It is to tradition, however, that footlights have held on with a tenacity that is surprising. Footlights are, after all, only the survival of a period in which candles were employed; and a nice commotion there was when these had to give way to lamps, as the majority of actors (so I have read) considered the stumps of the candles as their perquisites. But despite their convenience, footlights will always remain an unnatural method of lighting the stage, as light does not come from the ground in nature.

My last 'grumble' is in connection with the stage boards and stage sky. Hills and rocks, if they are made to spring from flat boards, can never give a pictorial effect. I can see no difficulty in the introduction of inequalities in ground surface on the stage, and I think it is a pity more attention has not been given to this question. The sky, however, offers great difficulties, and can never be made satisfactory whilst auditoriums are built in the old well-shape. No scenic artist can make a finished and complete stage-picture for people in all parts of such a theatre. The ideal auditorium in this respect is, of course,

A MOONLIGHTER AT BUSHEY.

PROFESSOR H-RE-M-R, A.R.A., INSTRUCTING MASTER HENRY IRVING AND MASTER GUSSIE HARRIS HOW TO ILLUMINATE "THE INCONSTANT MOON." (*"The Moon was not like the Moon ordinarily seen on the stage."—Vide general journalistic opinion on the "Herkomer Opera."*)

Reproduced by the special permission of the Proprietors of 'Punch.'

Wagner's Theatre in Bayreuth, which has been imitated, line for line, in Munich. But a non-subsidised theatre constructed in this way would not pay its way for a year. I am told that the two opera-houses in Munich, which are under the same management, are subsidised to the extent of fifty thousand pounds per annum; and this in Munich, where there is not a tithe of the wealth of London.

The traditional auditorium that I have mentioned has seats (boxes) so close to the proscenium that the occupants can see behind the scenes, hence skies have to be doctored with fly-sheets to prevent the ends of the main straight sky-canvas from being seen at the corners. No sky can be made complete for those who sit in the middle of the stalls, and for those who sit so near the proscenium, on either side.

To revert to the footlights again, it seems incredible that they have not yet been abandoned. They cast the shadow of the actor's nose up his forehead, light up the underneath of his chin, and the lower part of his eyebrows. He has to 'paint up' to obviate this, until he looks the caricature of a human face. Again, how absurdly they throw the shadow of his figure against a painted sea-background, the shadow moving across the breakers, as he paces the stage. Footlights are not only no help in stage-lighting, but a distinct drawback, against which both scenic artist and actor have to struggle. But they are still there in our most modern of theatres, and I see no signs of a near change. At no price would I have them in my theatre; with orchestra sunken (as at Bayreuth), and no footlights,

the eye went right into the picture without a disconcerting interruption. In my theatre I placed some lights at a certain distance from the proscenium on either side of the auditorium, but so boxed-in that the audience were unaware of them. The height at which I fixed them was level with the actor's face. These lights in strength, and in colour, could be worked by a man behind the proscenium.

A prominent actor asked me to give some advice regarding the introduction of such lighting into a theatre he was building. But I found stage-manager, stage-carpenter, and manager of the lights positively bristling with antagonism—'Never was done, couldn't be done, unnecessary,' etc., etc. These phrases were given to every suggestion that I made, so I politely bowed my way out of the unfinished theatre, and that theatre settled down to all the orthodox methods. Well, why should they not? The public does not want changes in scenic art. They love the old methods for association's sake, if not for other reasons. They parted reluctantly with the green baize drop-curtain, and even with gas, as electric light did not warm the theatre in the same way, they said.

Well, associations make us retain endless horrors in our homes; the ornaments, the furniture, and even the pictures on the wall, are hallowed by certain associations. Then, why not on the stage? But progress finds it difficult to get a footing, and a great art is left, more or less, in an infantile state, unable, in the stifling atmosphere of this conservatism, to grow to maturity.

NOTE.—Since writing this chapter, my attention has been directed to the exhaustive book on stage construction written by Mr. Edwin O. Sachs, and published by Batsford in 1898. Curiously enough, I neither saw nor knew of this book until nine years after it was published. The following is quoted from his book:

'If we wish to see a *mise-en-scène* on artistic lines, the outcome of extremist experiments, we have only the private stage at Bushey, where Hubert Herkomer, who at one time took a leading part in the movement in England, has at his own expense achieved numerous successes as a stage manager and scene painter. His miniature stage has been a working model from which our actor-managers have learnt much. Those who have had the good fortune to see one of the Bushey performances will have realised the difference between nondescript mounting and really artistic scenery. The general public knows little to what an extent the efforts of Hubert Herkomer have affected stage management. Without his private experiments, it is hardly probable that even Sir Henry Irving's stage would have shown such improvements as are now accepted as a matter of course.' He continues:

'I have before stated that it is my purpose to quote the opinions of others in treating a subject which lends itself so easily to prejudice, and I could not, perhaps, find a better opportunity than the present to reproduce some views on the anomalies which exist in the mounting of our plays, so ably expressed by Hubert Herkomer when the question of "stage reform" was first mooted in this country.' (I delivered a lecture on scenic art at the Avenue Theatre on the 28th January 1892.) 'This distinguished artist has generally put forward the argument that the real secret of perfect scenic art lies in illusion, *i.e.* in visual deception, or in not allowing the eye of the spectator to discern the means whereby the semblance of reality is obtained. Mere actuality will not accomplish this any more than will good painting *per se*. It is in the attempt to get absolutely every requisite effect by painting that so much mystery is lost on the stage, for the scenic artist's art should be as much concealed as that of the actor. It should not be too manifest whether a background is painted or modelled any more than whether an actor is "made up" or appears in his natural form. All we ask is that he shall look the character he is portraying. In the same way we desire that his background shall be artistically correct. Herkomer pleads that the "make up," as it were,

of the background should be regarded as of equal importance with the actor's personal "make up." To dispense with the one is to throw the actor and his surroundings out of harmony. Indeed, if we accept a rose-bush cut out of thin boards, the edges of which we can hold between our thumb and first finger, or a street scene painted on canvas and hung across the stage—a sheet that is moved like a sail by every draught, and upon which the shadows of the passing actors thrown from the footlights fall—we ought, in all truth, to be satisfied with an actor whose wig has been so badly fitted that his own hair is visible beneath the artificial covering. The latter would never be tolerated by the audience, yet the former are seldom objected to. The authority I am quoting considers that it is amazing how an audience, which is only too ready to ridicule the slightest inconsistency in the characters of a play, will meekly accept the grossest incongruities in the scenic effects. The utter absence of mystery, the barefaced, childish neglect of any effort to be true to the appearance of nature, never disturbs. Herkomer holds that the stage is a medium through which the greatest truths in nature can be brought home most effectively to the minds and hearts of the people, and that all the arts should, to their fullest capacity, be united to obtain the most perfect expression of life and its surroundings. But we should not be satisfied until the various arts employed on the stage are brought to an equal degree of perfection.

'Although scenic art has improved in this country, it has been a slow process, and has not been inspired by any solicitations from without. When our audiences begin to howl down a ridiculous stage moon, we shall probably find a way to mend that luminary. At present it is quite safe to let our moon rise perpendicularly *up* the sky very quickly until the mechanism is exhausted, and then to allow it to remain stationary. Further, it is quite an accepted arrangement that the moment this red rising moon appears above the horizon, it shall emit rays of blue light from the opposite direction from which it comes. It is safe to let down a "wobbly" sheet of canvas close to the footlights, with a scene painted thereon representing breakers dashing over the rocks, and perhaps a sinking ship in the distance, to which the actor may have to refer in his speech. It is safe to have layers of canvas hanging from the "sky" like so much washing hung on a line; and certainly but few have ever questioned the prerogative of the "firmament" to come together at right angles in the corner. It would take almost a volume to describe the many anomalies of scenery constantly observed on the London stage.'

CHAPTER XVII

An atmospheric sky, a moon, true to nature, and a ground of unequal surface: these were the most important scenic problems before me in the staging of my pictorial music-play, *An Idyl*. The first two taxed our mental resources severely, but the last was merely a matter of labour.

I begin with the sky. The back wall of the stage had a canvas stretched over it, upon which was painted a gradated blue sky. In front of this, and starting a couple of feet away from it at the lower end, was stretched, at a certain angle, a great sheet of fine gauze reaching right across the stage. The particular angle at which it was stretched brought the upper part some twelve feet forward. The painted sky became atmospheric by being seen through the gauze. This gauze gave me an additional surface upon which to play with colour by means of limelight. By the management of the lights back and front of it, its surface could be transformed into a transparent or an opaque (or semi-opaque) material. Clouds were reflected upon it from the front (ay, clouds that moved), presently passing away to leave the sky serene. The last roseate rays of the sun (which had cast real shadows from the corn shocks, hedges, and trees) had ceased to illuminate the distant hillock, and the whole background was bathed in that mystic tone of grey which causes forms to become

indefinite, and melt together into mere tone. Then rose the great red, solemn, harvest moon in the pink sky. Imperceptibly it moved upwards and gained in brilliancy as it ascended, not perpendicularly, but on a line true to nature.

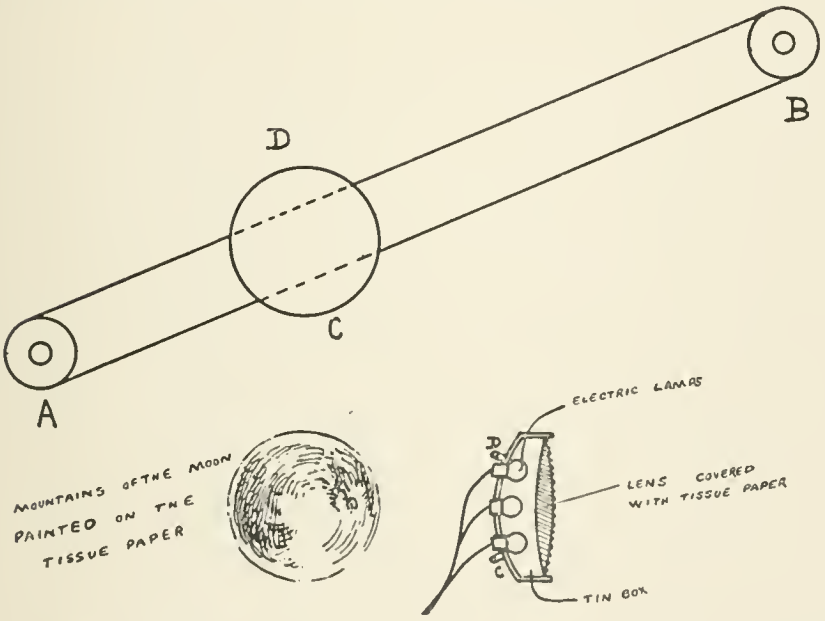
As the whole scene darkened (the act lasted forty-five minutes) the wonderful halo became more and more visible around the orb, following it faithfully in its course.

Perfect as my moon was, this halo was the crowning of my device, but one for which I can take no credit; its presence was as unexpected as it has remained unexplained. Perhaps the angle of the gauze sheet, at which it received the light of the moon from behind, may have had something to do with it. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the halo was *there*, pure luck as its presence may have been.

The rest of my moon device was anything but the result of luck. Simple as the invention became finally, it was only reached after much experimenting and failure. As complicated devices on the stage are impracticable, they must be so constructed that the most ordinary intelligence can work them. Unconscious humour in scenic art is even more undesirable than in portraiture. Scenic-burlesque could be made very funny, and I almost wonder that, in this age of exaggeration and grotesque perversion (made for the edification of children), more has not been done in that direction.

I find it rather difficult to describe a mechanical device in words. However clearly given, much depends also on

the reader's mind, which, if not of a mechanical turn, cannot easily follow such descriptions. I have therefore appended a drawing of my 'moon-mechanism' from which it will be seen that two wires are stretched taut around a couple of wheels at either end, A and B, fixed to the wall. The moon-box is fixed to one of them, either C or D. As



the man attending it gently pulls the one wire, the box moves upwards or downwards, the latter for the return to the original position for the next performance. The drawing of the moon-box itself shows the position of the three incandescent lamps, and the lens with tissue paper covering. Upon this paper I painted, with transparent colour, the mountains of the moon. For the red harvest moon I had merely to reduce the electric current until

the lamps came down to a mere glow, and then gradually to increase the current for the greater brilliancy. As everybody knows, the unusual size of the rising moon is but an optical illusion when seen in nature, arising, I presume, from its juxtaposition to natural objects. With my modelled background I obtained precisely the same effect.

This hillside was undulating, roads were visible, with hedges here and there, and shocks of corn, suggesting harvest labour. But every object was raised,—that is, modelled with a composition of plaster, glue, and tow. The proportion of these objects was a matter of nice calculation, but once correct, a figure could stand quite close to this background and yet appear, from the auditorium, to be miles away. No less fine was the calculation of the distribution of light, so that passing actors should not throw their enormous shadows across the distance.

The stereoscopic realism of this modelled background led some people to believe that I had opened out the back of the theatre to show real nature (undulating hillside in Bushey !), and it got about that we gave out-door pastorales. Daylight (open air) makes illusion impossible, and such performances in gardens and parks are ridiculously incongruous to my thinking. Painting a costume figure out of doors with the real background is quite another thing, because one would treat both pictorially on the canvas, and in the latter case what the art would do has to be done by lighting in stage-craft.

Oberammergau plays disturb me for the same reason.

On a few rare occasions, they have been favoured by stage-effects in the real sky. Once a tremendous storm with thunder and lightning broke out just behind the figures as they were suspended on the crosses, causing a superstitious fear in the minds of the peasants who witnessed it. A friend of mine was present at another performance, when a storm broke out as Judas was on the stage alone. Just as he was undoing his girdle, with which to hang himself, a terrific clap of thunder shook the place. The poor peasant forgot his part, fell on his knees, and with hands out-stretched to heavenward, shrieked, 'Lord, Lord, remember I am only acting the part of Judas.'

A flash of daylight played a curious trick on my stage during a performance: in spite of all my precautions, the 'moon-man' forgot to take the key out of a back-door. Some one opened it, but quickly shut it again, just as my harvest moon was rising. Stage-managers are known to use strong language when things go wrong, and I was no exception on this occasion. I was preparing explanations to my guests when we received them after the performance, but before I could come by a word, one after the other of the guests congratulated me on that wonderful effect of 'summer lightning.'

Coming back to the actual making of the stage-picture, I must explain that the houses on either side of the street were 'built up' of various light materials, and had the appearance of solidity; they were, in consequence, necessarily fixtures. The street had a gutter, or water-course, down the middle of it, from which the cobbled surface (carved

in the wood) rose on either side as far as the house-fronts.

The anvil of the smiths rested on a tree trunk, which passed through the stage and orchestra until it reached the solid ground. Such a precaution was necessary, as my two stalwart smiths dealt tremendous blows, which might have caused the alarming accident of anvil and smiths going through the stage on to the heads of the musicians if they had not had something solid under their hammers.

As the houses and uneven street were immovable, something had to be devised for the practicable introduction of an interior in the second act. I accordingly contrived an arrangement to let down the three sides of a room, which had been folded up against the upper part of the front stage wall. Moving easily on hinges (and worked by one man) these sides unfolded as they were lowered. The addition of a flat floor (to cover the cobbles) and the furnishing of the room were small matters. The act ended, these sides were pulled up (by the one man), folding themselves automatically in transit and resting against the wall.

With the *Idyl* my efforts in stage-craft ended. Although in the fever of success I had planned another, and much more ambitious work (and had indeed written much of the music), it fortunately never came off. As it was, the innings was short, but brilliant; and happy the man who can stop when success is reached.

The other two plays I produced had no significance from a scenic point of view, as they were dramatic rather than pictorial. One was a translation of Coppée's masterly

one-act piece, *Le Luthier de Crémone*, and the other a piece specially written for me by Mr. W. L. Courtney, called *Gaston Boissier*, in which I had a very picturesque figure of an old Breton peasant to represent. In the first-named, I took the part of the apprentice (a hunchback), for which I cut off my beard, much to the horror of my old friends.

In creating the part of Gaston Boissier, I wished, as far as art would allow, to be true to nature in the second act, where he is represented as an old palsy-stricken man, feeble in body, but still fiery in spirit and temper. I thought it best to correct my 'tremble' from real nature, and had the place searched for a very feeble old man. Such an old man, living in poverty, was found in Watford. I had him brought to the theatre in a pony-chaise, and showed him the various actions he was to do, *i.e.*, get up from his chair, carry a candle, and shelter the light from his face by one hand, and walk across the stage. It was extremely interesting to see on what points he differed from my conception of such a physical condition. I thought my students ought to see him, so that they could judge how much I had invented and how much I had taken from the model. I paid him liberally, gave him clothes, and arranged for him to be sent for again that day week, for which occasion I invited the students to attend. What was their surprise when they saw his hand steady and his step firm; he got up from his chair with alertness and ease! 'But, Professor,' they said, 'what are we to learn from this man? He isn't feeble at all, and his hand does

not tremble.' Well, I was as nonplussed as they were. The solution of the mystery was, that with my money he had been feeding up during the week, and had gained physical strength. Moral: Never pay your models until you have done with them.

CHAPTER XVIII

I DO not wish to preach my gospel further, but there is a lighter side to the school and the life of the students. Incidents of a more or less humorous kind must occur in a colony of so many young art students. Something would surely be wrong if they did not occur. It would either mean oppression on the part of the master, or a want of vigorous youth on that of the students. But the so-called humour arising from a mere defiance of master and school rules is not humour at all. I have no objection to practical jokes if they be harmless (although they are nearly always stupid), but if the humour of such jokes depends on causing fright, I can only declare them to be dangerous and highly reprehensible.

A practical joke, but one framed on the lines of causing fright, had a curious ending. It must be told that there was a building of iron and wood which I had converted into four studios; these were occupied by students, who both worked and slept in them. Two young idiots thought they would frighten the one living in the first studio by climbing up on to the roof in the dead of night when he lay in bed, rap on the skylight, and make strange noises. They did so, and then peered through the glass of the skylight into the dim studio below to see the result. To their horror they saw the student jump out of bed, and after a

shriek, fall forward upon his face, kicking and struggling on the ground. 'Good God,' said one, 'he's in a fit; quick, let's wake the others and get a doctor.' They banged at the doors, brought out the students, who then hammered at the door of the unfortunate student to gain admittance. But the locked door held fast, and they could only listen to the groans from within. After a long time of waiting, the door at last was opened by that particular student himself, roaring with laughter! He had thus successfully turned the tables on his would-be practical jokers.

There was also a practical joke perpetrated in the school, and one which had a moral in it. Before I left for a visit to America, I gave each student careful advice as to the course of study during my absence. I also left instructions that there was to be no school dance at the end of the term. Well, the students racked their brains to hit on an entertainment that would obey the order to the letter, but would circumvent the spirit of it. On that last evening of the term they decided to come in various costumes, but to be masked; after some tableaux, and after a given word, all were to unmask. There is little doubt that the evening was 'going slow.' Presently a lady sat down at the piano and played a waltz. Youthful exuberance of spirit could hold out no longer, and all but the most rigidly loyal began to dance; and even those who first held aloof finally succumbed to the excitement of the moment. When their gaiety was at its height, I suddenly appeared in the doorway, in travelling cap and overcoat. 'Tableau' with a vengeance! It was as though a bomb had been thrown

A ZITHER-EVENING WITH MY STUDENTS IN MY STUDIO

among them. No word was spoken, and I quickly turned and left. The dance was now out of their legs, and with troubled consciences they hurried home to their lodgings. The next day they ascertained that I was still in America, and that it was no astral apparition, but a solid impersonation of myself by a nephew of mine; and admirably I am told it was carried out.

Living in studios has been, and is still, a favourite practice with the students, who find it much cheaper, if more inconvenient. But young people don't mind inconveniences; they rather like the novelty of it until it palls, or they find themselves getting out of order in their digestive organs from the haphazard commissariat. One cold winter every water-pipe was frozen hard, and the only obtainable water for ablutions was soda-water. Therefore, the advantages of this kind of life summer and winter are hardly commensurate with the unavoidable discomforts. Even when they cooked their own messes, they were often too casual to provide themselves with proper cooking utensils. I have in mind the case of two students living together in a studio, who, for their first breakfast, had provided themselves with a bloater, but when it came to cooking it, discovered they had neither frying-pan nor saucepan. Nothing daunted, the one who was an etcher put the bloater on to one of his etched zinc plates, placed it on the little oil stove, and in truly artistic fashion left it to take care of itself whilst he attended to other matters. When he looked to see how the bloater was progressing, he found that the plate had melted away,

and the bloater (not yet done) rested on the stove. A half-done bloater, with bits of melted zinc sticking about him, is food for reflection but not for eating.

An incident, showing the drastic measures of self-criticism to which the students could subject themselves, may be related. At the end of a term the students collected all the bad studies they had done. They heaped them up in the garden adjoining the school, and at twilight, after a solemn ceremony of libation (turps and petroleum) set light to the failures. Joining hands, they then danced around the blazing bonfire, shouting and singing like demented creatures. They felt a fierce joy in destroying the work that was a tell-tale of their incapacity.

Our theatricals brought the students into more than ordinarily close touch with me, and both the men and the women were generally glad to get me 'off' duty.' At rehearsals, and even at performances, they would at times watch for a chance of getting a word with me about their work. One incident that happened during the play of *Gaston Boissier* remains in my memory as of particular interest. In one scene, some girls (selected from the school) had to peer in at the window, and then rush away again. At a performance, and before the curtain rose, I was standing about, talking to this or that personage on the stage, when one of these girls took the opportunity of pouring out her trouble to me regarding her schoolwork. I had watched her work with some curiosity and interest: as schoolwork it was decidedly bad, but in it I could discern a struggle that denoted something of import in

PROFESSOR SIR HUBERT VON HERKOMER

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J. Seymour Lucas, R.A.

the future, providing the talent were carefully handled. She was most downhearted and despondent, and I saw the trouble really lay in a slack will at that moment. I did not accordingly go into the matter of her work, but simply took her by the shoulders and shook her. 'Look here, my dear girl,' I said, 'you've *got* to get it.' This at once brought her courage back, and she said, stamping her foot on the stage: 'I *will* get it.' This student has since become a most distinguished painter.

. . . . . .

It is now clear to me that this book should close. My theatrical tendencies enable me to appreciate 'effect,' and the right effect in this case would be to make my bow after some well-chosen words. But there is my difficulty —I do not mean as regards the bow, but the well-chosen words. It was a pretty simple effort to state definite facts and thoughts in the foregone pages; but it is quite a different effort to bring facts and thoughts to a conclusion: that requires a literary gift to which I can make no claim. Indeed, at the very thought of such a piece of writing I see breakers ahead; therefore, I think I will make for the open sea, and trust to meet my reader again at some future date, when on another voyage and in another ship.

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